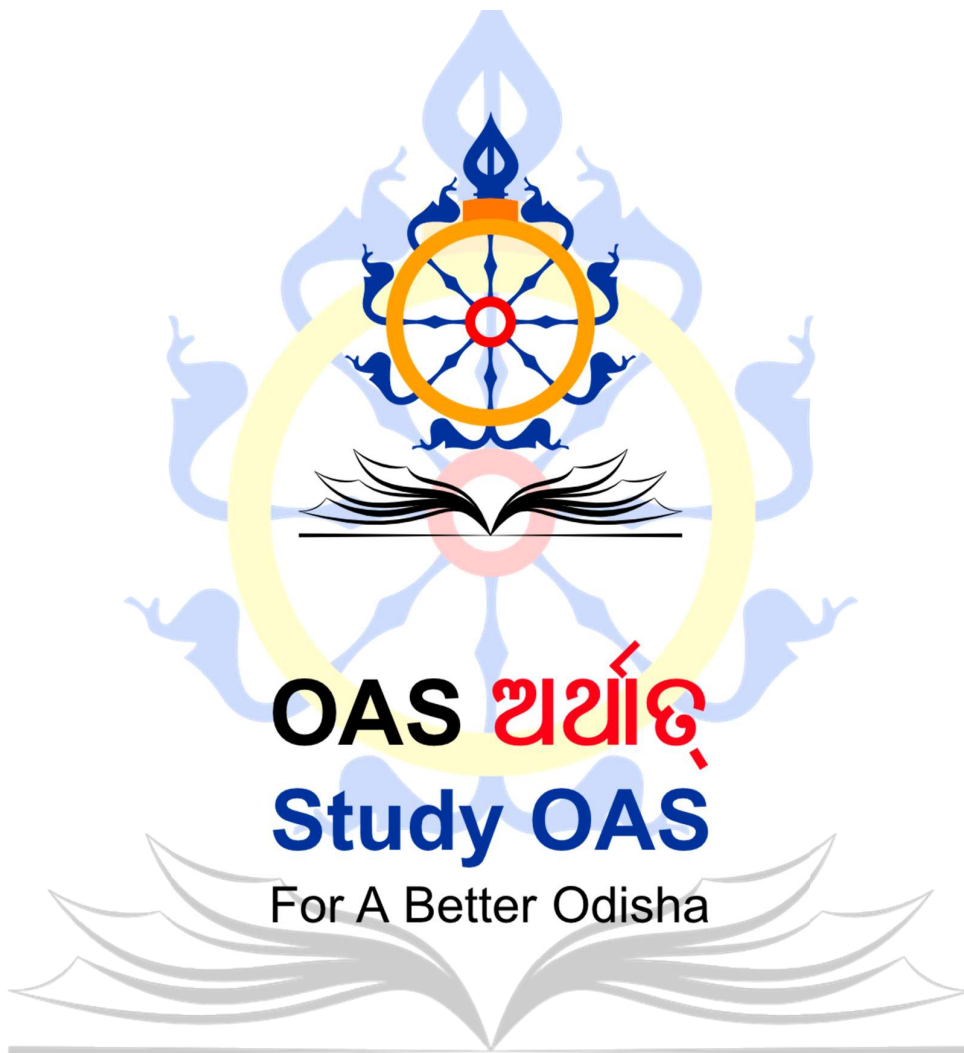


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Governance & Policy

Government Revises Immigration and Foreigners Rules, 2025

What's the News?

- The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has notified amendments to the **Immigration and Foreigners Rules, 2025**.
- The changes primarily revise:
 - Registration requirements for foreign nationals staying in India beyond prescribed limits.
 - Reporting obligations relating to children born in India to foreign nationals.
 - Compliance requirements for institutions dealing with foreigners.
- The amendments aim to strengthen immigration management, improve monitoring of foreign nationals, and streamline administrative procedures.

Key Changes in Foreigners Registration Rules

Registration Before 180-Day Limit

- Foreign nationals holding visas valid for **180 days or less** must now complete registration **before the expiry of the 180-day period** if they intend to stay longer in India.
- Earlier, registration could be completed **within 14 days after the completion of 180 days** from arrival.
- The amendment removes this post-expiry grace period and advances the compliance requirement.

Extended Stay Only in Emergencies

- Registration permitting stay beyond the prescribed period will generally be granted only in **emergent circumstances**.
- This is intended to strengthen scrutiny of long-term stays by foreign nationals.

Applicability

- The revised provisions also apply to foreigners holding visas exceeding 180 days where the permitted duration of a single stay is capped at 180 days.

Changes Relating to Children Born in India

Exemption for Children with Indian Citizenship

- Electronic intimation to registration authorities is no longer required when:
 - Either parent is an **Indian citizen**, and
 - The parents intend to retain the child's **Indian citizenship**.

- This reduces compliance requirements for such families.

Reporting Foreign Citizenship

- If a child born in India subsequently acquires a foreign nationality while residing in India:
 - Either parent must inform the registration authority within the prescribed period.
- This ensures updated citizenship records for immigration purposes.

Institutional Compliance Requirements Information Sharing by Medical Institutions

- Hospitals, nursing homes and other medical institutions dealing with foreign nationals continue to have obligations to furnish prescribed information to authorities.
- The revised framework seeks better coordination between institutions and immigration authorities.

Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 Overview

- The Rules operate under the **Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025**.
- The Act consolidates India's immigration framework into a single law governing:
 - Entry of foreigners.
 - Stay and movement within India.
 - Exit from India.
 - Registration and compliance requirements.

Significance

- Creates a unified legal framework for immigration administration.
- Enhances national security and monitoring mechanisms.
- Improves accountability of institutions interacting with foreign nationals.
- Streamlines registration and reporting procedures.

Additional Info

Important Authorities

- **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**
- **Bureau of Immigration (BoI)**
- **Foreigners Regional Registration Offices (FRROs)**
- **Foreigners Registration Officers (FROs)**

Earlier Laws Consolidated by the Immigration Framework

- **Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920**
- **Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939**
- **Foreigners Act, 1946**

- **Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act, 2000**

Centre Prepares Three-Year Anti-Narcotics Action Plan

What's the News?

- The Union Government has prepared a **three-year national anti-narcotics action plan** to strengthen India's fight against drug trafficking and organized narcotics networks.
- The strategy focuses on dismantling domestic drug cartels, improving inter-agency coordination, enhancing intelligence gathering, and targeting the financial networks behind the narcotics trade.
- New specialized verticals are being established within central enforcement agencies to improve operational effectiveness and data-driven investigations.
- The initiative aligns with the government's broader goal of achieving a **drug-free India** through coordinated enforcement, prevention, and rehabilitation measures.

Three-Year Anti-Narcotics Action Plan Key Objectives

- Disrupt and dismantle major drug trafficking syndicates operating within and across India's borders.
- Strengthen intelligence-led operations against narcotics networks.
- Target proceeds of crime and financial assets generated through drug trafficking.
- Enhance coordination among central and state law enforcement agencies.
- Improve monitoring of emerging synthetic drugs and precursor chemicals.

Major Features

- Creation of dedicated operational verticals within federal agencies.
- Greater use of technology, data analytics, and intelligence-sharing platforms.
- Focus on identifying and neutralizing domestic drug cartels.
- Enhanced surveillance of trafficking routes, including coastal and border regions.
- Stronger investigation of money laundering linked to narcotics offences.
- Capacity-building and specialized training for enforcement personnel.

Why is India Vulnerable to Drug Trafficking?

- India lies between two major illicit drug-producing regions:
 - **Golden Crescent**
 - Afghanistan
 - Iran
 - Pakistan
 - **Golden Triangle**
 - Myanmar
 - Laos
 - Thailand
- Extensive land and maritime borders create multiple trafficking routes.
- Growth of synthetic drugs and online drug markets has increased enforcement challenges.

Institutional Framework Against Narcotics

NCB (Narcotics Control Bureau)

- Apex central agency for combating drug trafficking.
- Functions under the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.
- Coordinates with state police forces, customs authorities, and international agencies.

NCORD Mechanism

- **Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD)** serves as the national platform for:
 - Intelligence sharing.
 - Coordination among ministries and enforcement agencies.
 - Monitoring anti-drug initiatives.

Legal Framework

Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985

- Principal legislation regulating narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in India.
- Provides for:
 - Prevention of illicit trafficking.
 - Investigation and prosecution of offences.
 - Seizure and forfeiture of illegally acquired property.
 - Regulation of legitimate medical and scientific use.

Additional Info

National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR)

- Implemented by the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.
- Focuses on:
 - Awareness generation.
 - Preventive education.
 - Treatment and rehabilitation.

- Capacity building of service providers.

Financial Investigation in Narcotics Cases

- Increasing emphasis on:
 - Tracking proceeds of crime.
 - Asset seizure and forfeiture.
 - Coordination with anti-money laundering agencies.
- Aims to weaken the economic foundations of drug cartels.

National Awards for e-Governance 2026 Announced; 17 Digital Governance Projects Honoured

What's the News?

- The Government of India announced the winners of the **National Awards for e-Governance (NAeG) 2026**, recognizing outstanding digital governance initiatives across the country.
- A total of **17 projects** were selected for awards across multiple categories covering digital transformation, citizen-centric service delivery, innovation, and emerging technologies.
- The awards aim to promote **efficient, transparent, accountable, and citizen-focused governance** through the use of digital technologies.

National Awards for e-Governance (NAeG)

- Administered by the **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)** under the **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions**.
- Recognizes excellence in:
 - Digital transformation of government processes.
 - Citizen-centric service delivery.
 - Adoption of emerging technologies.
 - Innovation in governance.
- Encourages replication of successful governance models across states and departments.

Major Highlights of NAeG 2026

- **17 projects** received national recognition for innovative use of technology in governance.
- Award-winning initiatives came from:
 - Central Government ministries and departments.
 - State Governments and Union Territories.
 - Local governance institutions.
 - Research and innovation-driven organizations.

- Focus areas included:
 - Digital public service delivery.
 - AI-enabled governance solutions.
 - Administrative process re-engineering.
 - Inclusive and accessible citizen services.

Award Categories

- The 2026 award framework covers seven broad categories:
 - **Government Process Re-engineering for Digital Transformation**
 - **Innovation through AI and New-Age Technologies**
 - **Citizen-Centric Service Delivery**
 - **District-Level Governance Initiatives**
 - **Grassroots Digital Governance**
 - **Research and Innovation in e-Governance**
 - **Special Governance Excellence Categories**

Additional Info

Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)

- Nodal agency for:
 - Administrative reforms.
 - Public grievance redressal.
 - Promotion of e-governance.
- Functions under:
 - **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.**

Digital India Programme

- Launched to transform India into a:
 - Digitally empowered society.
 - Knowledge-based economy.
- Key pillars:
 - Digital infrastructure as a utility.
 - Governance and services on demand.
 - Digital empowerment of citizens.

National Conference on e-Governance (NCeG)

- Annual platform for:
 - Policymakers.
 - Administrators.
 - Technology experts.
- Facilitates exchange of best practices and innovations in governance.

Great Nicobar Airport Project Gets ₹13,000 Crore Approval

What's the News?

- The Union Government has approved an investment of up to **₹13,000 crore** for the construction of a **dual-use greenfield airport** at **Great Nicobar Island** in the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.



- The airport will serve both **civilian aviation** and **military operations**, strengthening India's strategic presence in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.

- The project forms a key component of the broader **Great Nicobar Island Development Project** and is expected to be operational within about five years.

Dual-Use Airport Project

- Proposed investment:
 - **₹13,000 crore.**
- Funding:
 - Jointly supported by the **Ministry of Defence** and the **Ministry of Civil Aviation**.
- Operational role:
 - Civilian passenger and cargo operations.
 - Military and strategic aviation requirements.
- Expected management:
 - Operational control is proposed to be with the **Indian Navy**.

Strategic Importance of Great Nicobar

- Great Nicobar lies close to the **Malacca Strait**, one of the world's busiest maritime chokepoints.
- The strait connects the **Indian Ocean** and the **Pacific Ocean** and carries a substantial share of global trade and energy shipments.

Great Nicobar Island Development Project

- The airport is part of the broader **Holistic Development of Great Nicobar Island** project.
- Major components include:
 - International container transshipment terminal.
 - Greenfield airport.
 - Power infrastructure.
 - Township and associated logistics facilities.
- The project aims to transform Great Nicobar into a major maritime, logistics, and strategic hub.

Environmental and Tribal Concerns

- The project has generated debate regarding:
 - Ecological impacts on a biodiversity-rich island ecosystem.
 - Conservation of tropical forests and coastal habitats.
 - Protection of indigenous tribal communities.
- Authorities have stated that development will be pursued alongside environmental safeguards and protection of tribal interests.

- Legal challenges regarding compliance with forest and tribal rights provisions remain under consideration.

Additional Info

Great Nicobar Island

- Southernmost island of India.
- Part of the **Nicobar Group of Islands**.
- Located near:
 - **Malacca Strait.**
 - **Andaman Sea.**
 - Key Indo-Pacific shipping routes.

Malacca Strait

- One of the world's most important maritime chokepoints.
- Connects:
 - **Indian Ocean**
 - **South China Sea**
 - **Pacific Ocean**

Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC)

- India's only **Tri-Service Command**.
- Integrates:
 - Indian Army.
 - Indian Navy.
 - Indian Air Force.
- Plays a crucial role in:
 - Maritime security.
 - Surveillance of sea lanes.
 - Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR).

India Launches 'Vinimay' for Digital Land Border Management

What's the News?

- Union Home Minister **Amit Shah** launched **Vinimay**, a centralized digital platform known as the **Land Port Management System (LPMS)**.
- The platform aims to modernize and digitize cargo processing, passenger movement, and vehicle management across India's land borders by integrating multiple regulatory and security agencies on a single interface.

Land Port Management System (Vinimay)

- **Unified Ecosystem:** Integrates cargo management, vehicle processing, passenger movement, and inter-agency coordination into a single digital interface.
- **Agency Integration:** Connects key stakeholders including **ICEGATE, CBIC, BSF, DGFT, U IDAI, ULIP**, and Motor Vehicle Systems for seamless, real-time data exchange.
- **Single Electronic Window:** Provides a unified clearance mechanism for users, significantly enhancing the ease of



doing business and cross-border trade facilitation.

Key Features

- **Single-Window Clearance System:** Reduces the need for multiple approvals and physical documentation.
- **Digital Cargo Processing:** Online submission and verification of trade documents.
- **Passenger Processing:** Faster and more transparent border-crossing procedures.
- **Integrated Services**
 - Slot booking.
 - Online payments.
 - Cargo tracking.
 - Vehicle management.
- **Real-Time Data Sharing:** Facilitates secure information exchange among agencies and stakeholders.

Smart Border Management

- VINIMAY is a key component of India's **Smart Border Management** strategy.
- It supports:
 - Technology-driven border governance.
 - Better monitoring of cross-border movement.
 - Enhanced national security.
 - Prevention of illegal trade and unauthorized activities.
 - Greater efficiency in customs and immigration processes.

Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)

- Statutory body under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- Established under the **Land Ports Authority of India Act, 2010**.
- Functions under the **Department of Border Management**.
- Responsible for:
 - Development and management of Integrated Check Posts (ICPs).
 - Infrastructure and operational management of land ports.
 - Facilitating secure and efficient cross-border movement.

Centre Extends Tenure of Ravi-Beas and Krishna Water Disputes Tribunals

What's the News?

The Central Government has extended the tenure of two of India's oldest river water dispute tribunals—the **Ravi-Beas Water Tribunal** and the **Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal (KWDT-II)**—by one year. The extension was granted as both tribunals are yet to submit final reports

and resolve long-pending inter-state river water-sharing disputes.

Ravi-Beas Water Tribunal

Overview

- Constituted in **1986** under the **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956**.
- Also known as the **Eradi Tribunal**.
- It is India's **oldest active water dispute tribunal**.

States Involved

- Punjab
- Haryana
- Rajasthan

Key Issues

- Verification of water usage claims by the concerned states.
- Determination of shares in the remaining Ravi-Beas waters.
- Linked to the long-pending **Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) Canal dispute** between Punjab and Haryana.

Status

- The tribunal submitted its initial report in 1987.
- States and the Centre sought clarifications, resulting in repeated extensions.
- The latest extension pushes its tenure further as the dispute remains unresolved.

Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal (KWDT-II)

Overview

- Constituted in **2004** under the **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956**.
- Adjudicates disputes concerning the sharing of Krishna River waters.

States Involved

- Maharashtra
- Karnataka
- Andhra Pradesh
- Telangana (after bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh)

Major Issues

- Allocation and reallocation of Krishna River waters.
- Distribution of river waters between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana after the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation.
- Additional Terms of Reference relating to post-bifurcation water sharing.

Status

- Despite multiple extensions, the tribunal has not delivered a final acceptable resolution.
- The Union Jal Shakti Ministry has also been engaging with Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to facilitate consensus-based solutions.



Inter-State River Water Disputes

Mechanism

Constitutional Provisions

Article 262

- Empowers Parliament to provide for adjudication of disputes relating to inter-state rivers and river valleys.
- Allows Parliament to exclude the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and other courts in such disputes.

Legislative Framework

Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956

- Enacted under Article 262.
- Provides for the establishment of tribunals when negotiations fail.
- Tribunal decisions, once notified, have the force of a Supreme Court decree.

Additional Info

Active Inter-State Water Dispute Tribunals

- Ravi-Beas Water Tribunal
- Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal
- Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal
- Vamsadhara Water Disputes Tribunal
- Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal

Krishna River

- Origin: Mahabaleshwar, Maharashtra.
- Flows through Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.
- Major tributaries:
 - Bhima
 - Tungabhadra
 - Ghataprabha
 - Malaprabha
 - Musi

Ravi River

- One of the six rivers of the Indus Basin.
- Originates in Himachal Pradesh.
- Flows through Punjab before entering Pakistan.

Beas River

- Originates from Beas Kund near Rohtang Pass, Himachal Pradesh.
- Joins the Sutlej River in Punjab.

Supreme Court Declares Safe Footpath Walking a Fundamental Right

What's the News?

The Supreme Court has declared that the **right to walk safely and without fear on footpaths is a Fundamental Right** under Article 21 of the Constitution. The Court observed that pedestrians are among the most vulnerable road users and directed authorities to ensure obstruction-free, accessible, and safe footpaths. The judgment emphasizes that urban

infrastructure must prioritize pedestrians and not merely motorized transport.

Right to Walk as a Fundamental Right: Observations

- Citizens cannot be forced to walk on roads due to the absence or encroachment of footpaths.
- Safe pedestrian infrastructure is essential for preserving human dignity and personal safety.
- Urban planning must adopt a **pedestrian-centric approach** rather than a vehicle-centric model.
- Authorities have a constitutional obligation to maintain accessible and obstruction-free footpaths.

Authority Responsibilities

- Construct and maintain continuous footpaths.
 - Remove unauthorized encroachments.
 - Ensure accessibility for:
 - Persons with disabilities.
 - Senior citizens.
 - Children.
 - Improve pedestrian crossings and safety infrastructure.
 - Integrate pedestrian safety into urban planning and road design.
- ### Pedestrian Safety Concerns in India
- Pedestrians account for a significant share of road accident deaths in India.
 - Rapid urbanization has often prioritized motor vehicles over non-motorized transport.
 - Many cities face issues such as:
 - Encroached footpaths.
 - Broken pavements.
 - Lack of pedestrian crossings.
 - Inadequate facilities for persons with disabilities.

Additional Info

Article 21 of the Constitution

- Guarantees the **Right to Life and Personal Liberty**.
- Interpreted broadly by the Supreme Court to include:
 - Right to livelihood.
 - Right to health.
 - Right to clean environment.
 - Right to privacy.
 - Right to shelter.
 - Right to live with dignity.

Related Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 14** – Equality before law.
- **Article 19(1)(d)** – Freedom to move freely throughout India.
- **Article 41** – Assistance to persons with disabilities, elderly, and vulnerable groups (Directive Principle).



India Declares Naxalism Effectively Ended

What's the News?

The Government of India has announced that **Left Wing Extremism (LWE) or Naxalism has been effectively brought under control**, marking a historic milestone after nearly six decades of insurgency. The government attributed the success to a combination of security operations, infrastructure development, welfare delivery, and improved governance in affected regions. The number of LWE-affected districts, violent incidents, and casualties has witnessed a sharp decline over the years.

Integrated Anti-LWE Strategy

India's success against Naxalism is based on a **multi-pronged strategy** combining security, development, governance, and rights-based interventions rather than relying solely on military action.

Components

Security Measures

- Intelligence-based operations by Central and State forces.
- Deployment of specialized units such as:
 - CRPF's CoBRA battalions.
 - State anti-Naxal forces.
- Improved coordination among security agencies.
- Establishment of forward operating bases in remote areas.

Development Initiatives

- Expansion of roads, telecom connectivity, and banking services.
- Improved access to education and healthcare.
- Focus on tribal welfare and livelihood generation.
- Delivery of welfare schemes to previously inaccessible areas.

Governance Measures

- Strengthening local administration.
- Improved implementation of government schemes.
- Expansion of digital governance and financial inclusion.
- Increased presence of civil administration in former insurgency strongholds.

Decline of Left Wing Extremism

Trends

- Violent incidents have fallen drastically compared to peak levels witnessed during the late 2000s and early 2010s.

- Security force casualties and civilian deaths have significantly reduced.
- The geographical spread of Naxalism has contracted considerably.
- Many previously affected districts have been removed from the LWE-affected list.

Reasons for Decline

- Better intelligence gathering.
- Infrastructure penetration into remote areas.
- Improved road and mobile connectivity.
- Surrender and rehabilitation policies.
- Reduced recruitment base among local populations.
- Enhanced state presence in tribal regions.

SAMADHAN Doctrine

What is SAMADHAN?

SAMADHAN is the national strategy adopted by the Ministry of Home Affairs to combat Left Wing Extremism.

Components

Letter	Meaning
S	Smart Leadership
A	Aggressive Strategy
M	Motivation and Training
A	Actionable Intelligence
D	Dashboard-Based KPIs and KRAs
H	Harnessing Technology
A	Action Plan for Each Theatre
N	No Access to Financing

Additional Info

What is Left Wing Extremism (LWE)?

- Refers to Maoist-inspired insurgency seeking to overthrow the Indian state through armed revolution.
- Draws ideological inspiration from:
 - Charu Mazumdar
 - Maoist revolutionary doctrines.

Origin of the Naxalite Movement

- Began with the **Naxalbari Uprising (1967)** in:
 - Naxalbari
- Focused on issues of:
 - Land rights.
 - Tribal exploitation.
 - Socio-economic inequality.

Constitutional & Governance Dimensions

Fifth Schedule

- Applies to Scheduled Areas with significant tribal populations.
- Provides special administrative safeguards for tribal communities.

Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA)

- Empowers Gram Sabhas in Scheduled Areas.
- Protects tribal rights over natural resources.

Forest Rights Act, 2006

- Recognizes forest rights of Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.

Security Forces Involved

- Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)
- CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action)
- State Police Forces
- Intelligence agencies

Passport Not Proof of Citizenship: Government Reiterates Legal Position

What's the News?

The Union Government has clarified that an Indian passport is **not a conclusive proof of Indian citizenship**. The clarification came after public debate over a court case, with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stating that this has always been the legal position under the **Passports Act, 1967**. A passport is primarily a travel document issued after due verification but does not by itself determine or establish citizenship.

Why Is a Passport Not Proof of Citizenship?

- A passport is issued under the **Passports Act, 1967** to facilitate international travel and establish the holder's identity and nationality for travel purposes.
- The Act **does not declare a passport as conclusive evidence of citizenship**.
- Passport authorities verify documents submitted by applicants before issuance, but such verification **does not amount to a legal determination of citizenship**.
- If citizenship is later found to have been obtained fraudulently or the holder is ineligible, the passport may be cancelled or impounded.

Citizenship in India

- Citizenship in India is governed by the **Citizenship Act, 1955**, not the Passports Act.
- Indian citizenship can be acquired through:
 - Birth
 - Descent
 - Registration
 - Naturalisation
 - Incorporation of territory
- The Central Government is the competent authority to determine citizenship under the Citizenship Act.

Legal Position

- The Government cited judicial observations, including those of the **Bombay High Court**, which held that:
 - A passport is **only one piece of evidence** regarding nationality.
 - It is **not conclusive proof of citizenship**.
- Courts have consistently distinguished between:
 - **Nationality for travel purposes**, and
 - **Legal citizenship under Indian law**.

International Practice

Several countries also do not treat passports as absolute proof of citizenship:

Country	Position
United States	Passport is strong evidence but citizenship can still be challenged in cases of fraud or error.
Germany	Citizenship is determined under nationality law, not merely by possession of a passport.
United Kingdom	Passport is evidence of nationality for travel but not conclusive legal proof of citizenship.
Australia	Separate citizenship certificates are issued where required as definitive proof.

Difference Between Nationality and Citizenship

Citizenship	Nationality
Legal relationship between an individual and the State with associated rights and duties.	International legal identity of a person belonging to a nation.
Governed by domestic laws.	Recognised under international law.
Determines political rights such as voting and contesting elections.	Primarily relevant for diplomatic protection and international travel.

Additional Info

Passports Act, 1967

- Regulates:
 - Issue and renewal of passports.
 - Refusal of passports under specified grounds.
 - Suspension or impounding of passports.
- Administered by the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)**.

Citizenship Act, 1955

- Provides for:
 - Acquisition and termination of citizenship.
 - Registration and naturalisation.
 - Renunciation and deprivation of citizenship.
- Amended multiple times, including the **Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA)**.

Relevant Constitutional Provisions

- **Articles 5–11 (Part II)** deal with citizenship at the commencement of the Constitution.
 - **Article 5:** Citizenship at the commencement of the Constitution.
 - **Article 6:** Rights of migrants from Pakistan.
 - **Article 7:** Rights of migrants to Pakistan.
 - **Article 8:** Persons of Indian origin residing abroad.
 - **Article 9:** Voluntary acquisition of foreign citizenship.
 - **Article 10:** Continuance of citizenship.
 - **Article 11:** Parliament's power to regulate citizenship through law.

Operation Chakra-VI: CBI Launches Nationwide Crackdown on Digital Arrest Scams

What's the News?

The **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** launched **Operation Chakra-VI**, a nationwide operation against organised cybercrime networks involved in **digital arrest scams**. The agency conducted coordinated searches at **over 80 locations across 16 States** using around **60 specialised teams**. The operation targets networks linked to **more than 200 cyber fraud cases**, leading to the arrest of key operatives involved in creating shell companies and mule bank accounts used for laundering fraud proceeds.

What is Operation Chakra-VI?

- A nationwide CBI operation to dismantle organised cybercrime networks behind digital arrest frauds.
- Focuses on:
 - Identifying masterminds and facilitators.
 - Busting shell companies and mule bank account networks.
 - Tracing money laundering channels.
 - Seizing digital devices and financial records.
- Searches covered **16 States**, including **Odisha, Punjab, Gujarat, Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam, West Bengal, Manipur, Haryana and Karnataka**.

What is a Digital Arrest Scam?

A **digital arrest scam** is a cyber-enabled extortion fraud where criminals impersonate officials from agencies such as the police, CBI, ED, Customs or RBI and falsely claim that the victim is involved in a criminal investigation.

Common modus operandi:

- Victims receive calls or video calls from fraudsters posing as government officials.
- Fake arrest warrants, court orders or official identity cards are shown.
- Victims are threatened with immediate arrest or legal action.
- They are instructed to remain continuously on video call ("digital arrest") and transfer money to "safe" government accounts for verification.
- Funds are routed through **mule bank accounts** and shell companies before being withdrawn.

Findings of the Operation

- **80+** locations searched.
- **16 States** covered.
- **60 specialised teams** deployed.
- Network linked to **200+ digital arrest cases**.
- **Two key accused arrested**, allegedly involved in creating shell companies and operating mule bank accounts that laundered around **₹2 crore** of suspected crime proceeds.



Government Measures Against Cyber Fraud

- **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)** under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP)** for online complaint registration.
- **Cyber Crime Helpline - 1930** for immediate reporting of financial cyber fraud.
- Increased coordination among:
 - Banks
 - Telecom Service Providers
 - Financial Intelligence agencies
 - State Police
 - CBI

Additional Info

Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)

- Established: **1963**
- Parent Ministry: **Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT), Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions**
- Functions:
 - Anti-corruption investigations.
 - Economic offences.
 - Special crimes.
 - Multi-state and international crime investigations.
- Operates under the **Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, 1946**.

Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)

- Established by the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- Acts as the national nodal agency for combating cybercrime.
- Coordinates:
 - Cybercrime investigations.
 - Capacity building.
 - Cyber awareness.
 - Financial fraud mitigation.

Mule Bank Account

- A bank account used by fraudsters to receive and transfer illegally obtained money.
- Often opened using:
 - Stolen identities.
 - Recruited individuals.
 - Shell entities.

Shell Company

- A company with little or no genuine business activity.
- Frequently misused for:
 - Money laundering.
 - Tax evasion.
 - Concealing beneficial ownership.
 - Routing proceeds of crime.

LPG New Rules 2026: New 30-Day and 90-Day Rules for LPG Consumers

What's the News?

The Government has amended the **Liquefied Petroleum Gas (Regulation of Supply and Distribution) Order, 2026** to promote the **"One Household, One Gas Connection"** policy. The new framework introduces a **30-day rule** for households shifting to **Piped Natural Gas (PNG)** and reinforces the earlier **90-day transition period** for consumers in PNG-covered areas. The reforms aim to improve LPG availability, prevent duplicate connections, reduce subsidy leakages, and encourage the adoption of PNG where infrastructure exists.

New 30-Day Rule

Under the amended regulations, households that obtain a **PNG connection** must decide the status of their LPG connection within **30 days**.

Provisions

- Consumers must **surrender their LPG connection within 30 days** after obtaining a PNG connection.
- Instead of permanent surrender, consumers may opt for a **Transfer Voucher**, enabling restoration of the LPG connection if they later relocate to an area without PNG connectivity.
- Applies to customers of:
 - Indane
 - BharatGas
 - HP Gas

Objective

- Eliminate duplicate domestic cooking gas connections.
- Improve targeting of LPG subsidies.
- Increase LPG availability in areas without PNG infrastructure.
- Promote cleaner and more efficient PNG usage in urban areas.

90-Day Transition Rule

Overview

Earlier, the Government directed households located in **PNG-served areas** to shift from LPG to PNG within a **90-day (three-month)** period.

Purpose

- Encourage migration to piped gas where infrastructure is available.
- Reduce dependence on LPG cylinders in urban regions.
- Improve distribution of LPG to rural and remote areas.

Note: The amended 30-day provision provides flexibility by allowing consumers to surrender their LPG



connection after obtaining PNG and to retain the option of future restoration through a Transfer Voucher.

Other LPG Consumer Rules

Refill Booking Interval

- **Urban areas:** Minimum **25-day** gap between LPG refill bookings.
- **Rural areas:** Minimum **45-day** gap between refill bookings.

OTP-Based Delivery

- OTP verification has been made mandatory for LPG cylinder delivery to strengthen authentication and prevent misuse.

e-KYC

- LPG consumers, particularly beneficiaries under the **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)**, are required to complete **Aadhaar-based e-KYC** to continue receiving uninterrupted services and subsidies.

Piped Natural Gas (PNG)

Advantages

- Continuous gas supply through pipelines.
- No need for cylinder storage or refill booking.
- Generally lower operating cost than LPG.
- Enhanced safety with reduced handling of cylinders.
- Lower emissions compared to conventional fuels.

Additional Info

Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)

- A mixture primarily of **Propane (C₃H₈)** and **Butane (C₄H₁₀)**.
- Widely used as a domestic cooking fuel.
- Supplied mainly by Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies:
 - Indian Oil (Indane)
 - Bharat Petroleum (BharatGas)
 - Hindustan Petroleum (HP Gas)

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)

- **Launch:** 2016
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas
- **Objective:** Provide deposit-free LPG connections to eligible poor households to promote clean cooking fuel and reduce indoor air pollution.

First National Rural Development Conference 2026

What's the News?

The **first National Rural Development Conference 2026 (Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Sammelan)** was organised in **New Delhi** under the chairmanship of **Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan**. The

conference brought together **Union and State governments** to formulate a common roadmap for **"Viksit Gram, Viksit Bharat"**, review flagship rural development programmes, and improve last-mile delivery of welfare schemes.

National Rural Development Conference Objectives

- Develop a shared national strategy for rural transformation.
- Strengthen Centre-State coordination in implementing rural development schemes.
- Review the progress and impact of flagship programmes.
- Promote innovation, technology, and AI-driven governance in rural development.
- Improve transparency, accountability, and last-mile service delivery.

Major Focus Areas

- Rural housing.
- Rural road connectivity.
- Rural livelihoods and self-employment.
- Women's economic empowerment through **Lakhpati Didi**.
- Rural employment programmes.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital governance.
- Sustainable and inclusive village development.

Viksit Gram, Viksit Bharat

- Serves as the central theme of the conference.
- Envisions holistic rural development as the foundation for achieving **Viksit Bharat**.
- Emphasises:
 - Infrastructure development.
 - Livelihood generation.
 - Social inclusion.
 - Technology-driven governance.
 - Community participation in village development.

Additional Info

Ministry of Rural Development

- Nodal ministry for rural poverty alleviation and infrastructure development.
- Departments:
 - Department of Rural Development.
 - Department of Land Resources.
 - Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation (until its transfer to the Jal Shakti Ministry).

Major Flagship Schemes

- **Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G)** – Rural housing.

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- **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)** – All-weather rural roads.
- **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)** – Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and livelihoods.
- **MGNREGA** – Guaranteed wage employment in rural areas.
- **Lakhpati Didi Initiative** – Empowering women SHG members to achieve an annual household income of at least ₹1 lakh.
- **Governance Principle**
 - **Cooperative Federalism:**
 - Collaboration between the Union and State Governments in policy formulation and implementation.
 - Essential for effective execution of centrally sponsored rural development programmes.

AI-Enabled Rural Internal Audit Portal Launched to Strengthen Transparency

What's the News?

The Union Government has launched the **AI-enabled Rural Internal Audit Portal**, a first-of-its-kind digital platform to modernise internal audits of rural development programmes. Developed by the **Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)** in collaboration with the **National Informatics Centre (NIC)**, the portal digitises the complete audit lifecycle using Artificial Intelligence (AI), analytics, and automation to improve transparency, accountability, and governance.

Rural Internal Audit Portal

- AI-powered unified digital platform for managing internal audits of rural development programmes.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD).
- **Developed by:** MoRD in collaboration with the National Informatics Centre (NIC).
- **Conceived by:** Office of the Chief Controller of Accounts (CCA), MoRD.
- Supports both:
 - Risk-based audits.
 - Compliance audits.

Features

- End-to-end digital audit management covering:
 - Audit planning.
 - Audit execution.

- Audit reporting.
- Compliance monitoring.
- Action Taken Reports (ATRs).
- Analytics and dashboards.
- AI and Machine Learning for:
 - Risk assessment.
 - Audit prioritisation.
 - Decision support.
 - Detection of recurring audit observations.
- Centralised digital repository of audit records.
- Real-time monitoring of audit progress.
- Automated report generation and compliance tracking.

Digital Audit Lifecycle

The portal replaces fragmented, paper-based audit practices with a unified cloud-based system.

Audit Modules

- Identification of audit units.
- Audit engagement approval.
- Audit memos.
- Recording observations.
- Audit report preparation.
- Action Taken Reports (ATRs).
- Record archival and monitoring.
- Analytics dashboard for decision-making.

Implementation

- **Pilot Project:** Chandauli district, Uttar Pradesh.
- **Pilot Launch:** April 2025.
- Following successful validation, the portal was expanded nationwide.
- All major modules became operational from **October 2025** before the national launch.

Additional Info

Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)

- Responsible for implementation and monitoring of major rural development programmes including:
 - Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).
 - Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana–Gramin (PMAY-G).
 - Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM).
 - Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).

National Informatics Centre (NIC)

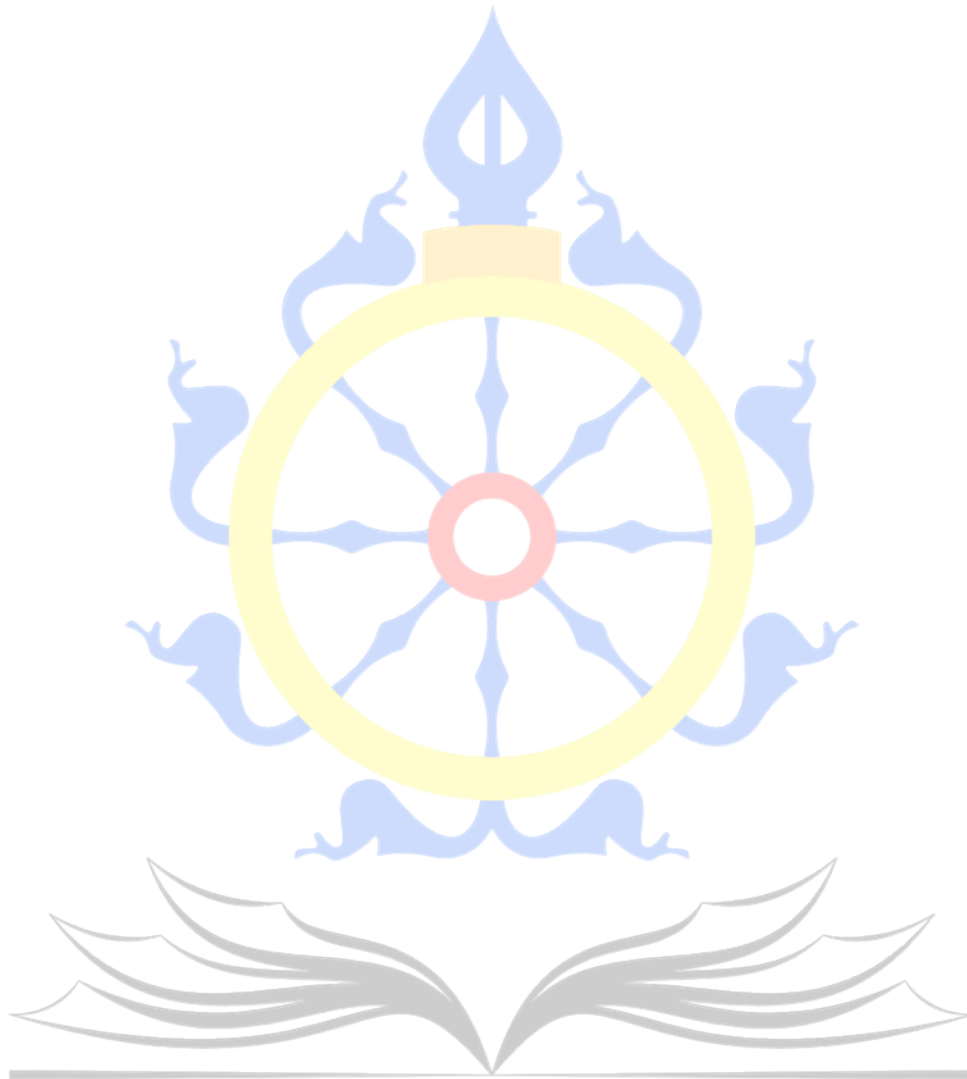
- Established: **1976**.
- Ministry: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- Provides ICT infrastructure and e-Governance solutions for the Government of India.

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Office of the Chief Controller of Accounts (CCA)

- Functions as the principal accounting authority within the Ministry.
- Oversees financial management, internal audit, and expenditure control.



Social Issues

Pedestrian Deaths Rising on Indian Roads: A Growing Road Safety Challenge

What's the News?

Government road safety data has revealed that more than 1.8 lakh pedestrians lost their lives in road accidents across India between 2019 and 2024, averaging over 30,500 deaths annually. Nearly one-third of these fatalities occurred on National Highways, highlighting the vulnerability of pedestrians not only in urban areas but also on high-speed inter-city roads. The findings have renewed concerns over inadequate pedestrian infrastructure, unsafe road design, and weak protection for non-motorized road users.

Pedestrian Fatalities in India

- More than **1.8 lakh pedestrian deaths** were recorded between 2019 and 2024.
- Average annual pedestrian fatalities exceeded **30,500 deaths**.
- Nearly **31% of all pedestrian deaths** occurred on the National Highway network.
- Around **54% of pedestrian fatalities** involved collisions with **two-wheelers and cars**.
- Pedestrians remain among the most vulnerable categories of road users in the country.

State-wise Trend

- Tamil Nadu reportedly recorded the highest number of pedestrian fatalities during the period.
- The issue is widespread across both urban and rural regions, indicating systemic deficiencies in pedestrian safety infrastructure.

Road Safety Measures

Government Initiatives

- **Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019**
 - Increased penalties for traffic violations.
 - Strengthened road safety enforcement.
- **National Road Safety Policy**
 - Promotes safer road engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency response.
- **Road Safety Audits**

- Conducted for National Highway projects to identify accident-prone stretches.

4E Strategy

- Engineering
- Enforcement
- Education
- Emergency Care

Recent Judicial Development

- The Supreme Court recently observed that the **right to walk on a demarcated footpath is a fundamental right**, emphasizing the importance of pedestrian-friendly urban planning.

Road Safety in India: Broader Picture

- Pedestrians and two-wheeler riders together accounted for nearly **67% of road fatalities in 2024**.
- Rural areas continue to record a disproportionately high share of road deaths.
- Road crashes impose a significant economic burden, estimated at over **3% of India's GDP**.

Additional Info

Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)

- Nodal ministry for road transport and highway development.
- Publishes the annual **Road Accidents in India** report.
- Responsible for national road safety policies and standards.

Vulnerable Road Users (VRUs)

Includes:

- Pedestrians
- Cyclists
- Two-wheeler riders

These groups face the highest risk of fatal injuries due to limited physical protection during crashes.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

Target 3.6

- Aims to significantly reduce global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.

Empowerment

MoSPI Partners with GRAAM for Embark India Development Fellowship

What's the News?

The **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** has signed a **Statement of Intent (SoI)** with the **Grassroots Research and Advocacy Movement (GRAAM)** to engage fellows under the **Embark India Development Fellowship (EIDF)**. The initiative aims to embed young researchers and professionals within MoSPI to support **policy research, data governance, programme implementation, and evidence-based policymaking**, contributing to the vision of **Viksit Bharat@2047**.

Embark India Development Fellowship (EIDF)

Overview

- A national leadership and capacity-building fellowship spearheaded by **GRAAM**.
- Designed to place young professionals, researchers, and academics in government institutions.
- Promotes evidence-based policymaking through research and field engagement.

Features

- **Duration:** 18 months.
- Includes **6-month immersive institutional placements**.
- Provides:
 - Hands-on policy experience.
 - Mentorship by national experts.
 - Grassroots data collection and policy research.
- Fellows receive a **monthly stipend of up to ₹65,000**.
- Initial collaboration involves the engagement of **two fellows** in MoSPI.

Role of Fellows

Selected fellows will contribute to:

- Policy research and analysis.
- Data governance initiatives.
- Programme implementation and monitoring.
- Capacity-building projects.
- Governance innovation.
- Preparation of evidence-based policy recommendations.
- Research assignments on ongoing and new developmental initiatives.

About GRAAM

GRAAM (Grassroots Research and Advocacy Movement) is a public policy and

governance research organisation that works on:

- Public policy research.
- Governance reforms.
- Programme evaluation.
- Community engagement.
- Capacity building.
- Development planning.

Its initiatives focus on bridging grassroots realities with evidence-based public policy.

About MoSPI

Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)

Functions

- Nodal ministry for India's official statistical system.
- Collects, compiles and disseminates national statistics.
- Monitors implementation of major government programmes and projects.
- Promotes data-driven governance and evidence-based policymaking.

Major Organisations under MoSPI

- **National Statistical Office (NSO)**
- **National Sample Survey (NSS)**
- **Central Statistics Office (CSO)** (*merged into NSO in 2019*)
- **Computer Centre**

Culture & Arts

ASI Uncovers Ancient Inscriptions and Rock Art in Nallamala Tiger Reserve

What's the News?

- The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** has completed an epigraphical and archaeological survey in the **Nallamala Tiger Reserve** of Andhra Pradesh.
- The survey led to the discovery of **25 inscriptions**, several ancient rock art sites, hero stones, temple remains, and other archaeological remains hidden within the forest region.
- The findings provide valuable insights into the political, cultural, religious, and social history of the Nallamala region across different historical periods.
- The discoveries highlight the importance of integrating heritage conservation with biodiversity conservation.

Discoveries

Ancient Inscriptions

- ASI documented **25 inscriptions** belonging to different historical periods.
- The inscriptions are written in:
 - Telugu
 - Sanskrit
 - Early regional scripts
- They provide information regarding:
 - Local rulers and dynasties.
 - Land grants and donations.
 - Religious institutions.
 - Administrative practices.

Rock Art Sites

- Several rock shelters containing prehistoric and early historic paintings were identified.
- The artworks depict:
 - Human figures.
 - Hunting scenes.
 - Animal motifs.
 - Geometric patterns.
- These paintings offer evidence of early human habitation in the Nallamala landscape.

Other Archaeological Remains

- Hero stones (Virgal).
- Temple ruins.
- Sculptural fragments.
- Ancient habitation sites.
- Ritual and religious structures.

Historical Significance

Understanding Regional History

- The discoveries help reconstruct the historical evolution of the Nallamala region.
- They provide evidence of:
 - Settlement patterns.
 - Trade and communication networks.
 - Religious practices.
 - Political control by various dynasties.

Dynastic Connections

- Some inscriptions are linked to medieval South Indian kingdoms that ruled parts of present-day Andhra Pradesh.
- The findings contribute to the study of:
 - **Satavahanas**
 - **Ikshvakus**
 - **Eastern Chalukyas**
 - **Kakatiyas**
 - **Vijayanagara Empire**
 - Other regional powers that influenced the area.

Nallamala Tiger Reserve

Location

- Situated in the **Eastern Ghats** across Andhra Pradesh.
- Forms part of the larger **Nagarjunsagar-Srisaïlam Tiger Reserve**, one of India's largest tiger habitats.

Ecological Importance

- Home to:
 - Tiger
 - Leopard
 - Sloth bear
 - Indian pangolin
 - Wild dog (Dhole)
- Contains rich tropical dry deciduous and mixed forest ecosystems.

Additional Info

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- Established in **1861** by **Alexander Cunningham**.
- Functions under the **Ministry of Culture**.
- Responsible for:
 - Archaeological research.
 - Conservation of monuments.
 - Epigraphical studies.
 - Heritage preservation.

Epigraphy

- Study and interpretation of inscriptions engraved on:
 - Stone



- Metal plates
- Temple walls
- Pillars
- Rock surfaces
- Important source for reconstructing ancient and medieval Indian history.

Rock Art in India

- Includes:
 - Petroglyphs (engravings)
 - Pictographs (paintings)
- Major rock art sites:
 - Bhimbetka Rock Shelters (UNESCO World Heritage Site)
 - Kupgallu Rock Art Site
 - Edakkal Caves

Chenchu Tribe

- A Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG).
- Primarily inhabits the Nallamala forest region.
- Traditionally dependent on:
 - Hunting and gathering.
 - Forest produce collection.
- One of the oldest forest-dwelling communities in southern India.

Assam and Tripura Secure GI Tags for Traditional Products

What's the News?

Several traditional products from **Assam** and **Tripura** have received **Geographical Indication (GI) Tags**, strengthening the protection of indigenous knowledge, promoting rural livelihoods, and preserving cultural heritage. Assam secured GI recognition for four traditional products, while Tripura's traditional musical instrument **Sarinda** also received the coveted tag, highlighting the cultural richness of Northeast India.

New GI-Tagged Products from Assam

1. Boka Chaul

- A unique variety of semi-glutinous rice indigenous to Assam.
- Can be consumed after soaking in water without cooking.
- Traditionally used during festivals and community gatherings.

2. Joha Rice

- Aromatic rice variety known for its distinctive fragrance.
- Widely cultivated across Assam.
- Considered Assam's premium indigenous rice.

3. Chokuwa Rice

- Sticky (glutinous) rice used in traditional Assamese cuisine.
- Important ingredient in local sweets and ceremonial foods.

4. Kaji Nemu

- Indigenous lemon variety of Assam.
- Known for its distinctive aroma, high juice content, and thin peel.
- Widely used in Assamese cuisine and traditional practices.

Sarinda of Tripura

What is Sarinda?

- A traditional stringed folk musical instrument.
- Played by indigenous communities of Tripura, particularly among tribal groups.
- Made primarily from wood and animal skin.
- Played using a bow similar to a violin.

Cultural Importance

- Integral to folk songs, storytelling traditions, and community ceremonies.
- Used during cultural festivals and traditional performances.
- Represents the rich musical heritage of Northeast India.

Geographical Indication (GI) Tag

What is a GI Tag?

A Geographical Indication is a sign used on products that possess qualities, reputation, or characteristics essentially attributable to their geographical origin.

Legal Framework

- Governed by the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**.
- Came into force in **2003**.

Registration Authority

- **Geographical Indications Registry, Chennai**.
- Functions under the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)**, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Validity

- GI registration is valid for **10 years**.
- Can be renewed indefinitely for successive periods of 10 years.

GI Tags and Northeast India

The Northeast region has witnessed increasing recognition of its unique products through GI registration.

Notable GI-Tagged Products

Assam

- Assam Tea
- Muga Silk
- Gamosa
- Karbi Anglong Ginger
- Boka Chaul
- Joha Rice
- Chokuwa Rice
- Kaji Nemu

Tripura

- Queen Pineapple
- Rignai
- Pachra
- Matabari Pera
- Sarinda

Additional Info

Objectives of GI Protection

- Protect traditional knowledge and cultural heritage.
- Promote rural economic development.
- Prevent unauthorized commercial exploitation.
- Enhance product competitiveness in domestic and global markets.

Difference Between GI and Trademark

Feature	GI Tag	Trademark
Ownership	Community/Producers of a region	Individual or Company
Linked to Geography	Yes	No
Transferable	No	Yes
Protection Basis	Origin and characteristics	Brand identity

Khurasani Imli of Mandu Receives Geographical Indication (GI) Tag

What's the News?

Khurasani Imli, a unique fruit associated with the historic town of **Mandu (Mandav)** in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district, has been granted the **Geographical Indication (GI) Tag**. The recognition provides legal protection to the product, strengthens its market identity, and is expected to boost the livelihoods of tribal communities engaged in its cultivation and trade. The GI tag also brings global attention to one of Mandu's lesser-known heritage products.

What is Khurasani Imli?

Unique Heritage Fruit

- Despite its name, Khurasani Imli is **not tamarind (Imli)**.
- It is the fruit of the **Baobab tree (*Adansonia digitata*)**, often called the "**Tree of Life**".
- The tree is native to Africa and is believed to have reached India centuries ago through trade links.
- Mandu hosts one of India's oldest and largest concentrations of Baobab trees.

Distinct Features

- Hard woody shell with dry, nutrient-rich pulp.
- Rich in:

- Vitamin C
- Calcium
- Potassium
- Dietary fibre
- Antioxidants

- Traditionally consumed as food and used in folk medicine.

Geographical Indication (GI) Tag

A Geographical Indication identifies goods originating from a specific region where a particular quality, reputation, or characteristic is essentially linked to that geographical origin.

Legal Framework

- Governed by the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**.
- GI Registry Headquarters: **Chennai**.
- Administered by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Benefits of GI Status

- Legal protection against unauthorized use.
- Enhanced market value and branding.
- Promotion of exports.
- Preservation of traditional knowledge and cultural heritage.
- Improved income opportunities for local producers.

Mandu: The Heritage Connection

- Mandu is located in **Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh**.
- Known for:
 - Afghan architecture
 - Medieval forts and palaces
 - The romantic legacy of **Baz Bahadur** and **Rani Roopmati**
- Historically connected to trade routes that may have facilitated the introduction of Baobab trees into the region.

Additional Info

Baobab Tree (*Adansonia digitata*)

- Native Region: Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Family: Malvaceae.
- Lifespan: Can survive for more than 1,000 years.
- Known for:
 - Massive trunk capable of storing large quantities of water.
 - Exceptional drought resistance.
 - High nutritional value of fruit pulp.

Geographical Indication vs Trademark

GI Tag	Trademark
Linked to a geographical region	Linked to an individual/company

Collective right of producers	Private ownership
Indicates origin and unique characteristics	Identifies brand ownership
Cannot usually be transferred independently	Can be sold or licensed

Notable GI-Tagged Products of Madhya Pradesh

- Chanderi Fabric
- Maheshwari Saree
- Ratlami Sev
- Kadaknath Chicken
- Bagh Prints

Rare Four-Sided Buddha Parinirvana Pillar Discovered in Telangana

What's the News?

A rare four-sided medieval stone pillar depicting **Buddha in Mahaparinirvana** has been discovered at **Bhimsari village** in **Adilabad district, Telangana**. The monument is archaeologically significant because it combines **Buddhist, Vaishnavite, and Shaivite** iconography on a single pillar, reflecting the religious coexistence and artistic synthesis of the medieval Deccan. The discovery was identified by members of the **Kotha Telangana Charitra Brundam** and later examined by noted historians and archaeologists.

Why is the Discovery Significant?

- The pillar is believed to date to the **10th century CE** based on its sculptural style.
- It contains **four half-relief carvings**, each on a different face:
 - **Buddha in Mahaparinirvana** (reclining Buddha)
 - **Vishnu Sayana Murti** (reclining Vishnu)
 - **Uma-Lingana Murti** (Shiva embracing Uma/Parvati)
 - A **royal warrior** holding a sword.
- It is regarded as the **first known pillar in Telangana** to combine Buddhist, Shaivite, and Vaishnavite imagery on a single monument.
- The discovery provides evidence of religious harmony and shared artistic traditions in the medieval Deccan.

Buddha Parinirvana

- **Parinirvana (Mahaparinirvana)** refers to the **final liberation of Gautama Buddha** after his death, marking complete freedom from the cycle of birth and rebirth.
- In Buddhist art, Buddha is typically depicted:
 - Lying on his **right side**.
 - Supporting his head with his **right hand**.
- The Bhimsari sculpture closely follows the description found in the **Parinibbana Sutta**, an important text of the Pali Canon.

Archaeological Importance

- Mahaparinirvana sculptures are **rare in Telangana**.
- Similar depictions have previously been reported from:
 - **Bhimeswara Temple, Vemulawada**
 - **Nagarjunakonda Museum**
- The discovery strengthens evidence of the continued influence of Buddhist traditions in the Deccan even after the decline of organized Buddhism in the region.

Additional Info

- **Parinibbana Sutta**
 - Part of the **Pali Canon (Tipitaka)**.
 - Describes the final days and Mahaparinirvana of Gautama Buddha.
- **Mahaparinirvana**
 - Place: **Kushinagar**
 - One of the **four major Buddhist pilgrimage sites**.
- **Important Buddhist Pilgrimage Sites**
 - **Lumbini** – Birth
 - **Bodh Gaya** – Enlightenment
 - **Sarnath** – First Sermon
 - **Kushinagar** – Mahaparinirvana

Environment

Northwest Indian Dust Storms: Why Are They Intensifying?

What's the News?

- A severe dust storm recently engulfed parts of **Rajasthan**, particularly **Churu**, causing near-zero visibility and disrupting normal life.
- Experts have linked the increasing frequency and intensity of dust storms in northwestern India to:
 - Land degradation and desertification.
 - Rising temperatures and prolonged dry spells.
 - Weakening ecological protection provided by the **Aravalli Range**.
- The phenomenon has raised concerns regarding climate resilience, air quality, agriculture, and public health.

Northwest Indian Dust Storms

- Dust storms are common pre-monsoon weather events across:
 - Rajasthan
 - Haryana
 - Punjab
 - Delhi-NCR
 - Western Uttar Pradesh

How Do Dust Storms Form?

- Strong surface winds lift loose soil and sand particles into the atmosphere.
- Conditions that favour dust storms include:
 - High temperatures
 - Dry soil conditions
 - Sparse vegetation cover
 - Thunderstorm-generated gust fronts

Major Dust Sources

- **Thar Desert** in India.
- Arid regions of **Pakistan** and **Southwest Asia**.
- Degraded agricultural and grazing lands in northwestern India.

Role of the Aravalli Range

- The **Aravalli Range** is one of the world's oldest fold mountain systems.
- It extends from **Delhi** through **Haryana**, **Rajasthan**, and into **Gujarat**.
- Acts as a natural barrier against:
 - Desert expansion.
 - Eastward movement of dust from the Thar Desert.

Why is the Protective Shield Weakening?

- Large-scale mining activities.
- Deforestation and loss of vegetation.

- Urban expansion and infrastructure development.
- Fragmentation of hill ranges creating gaps for dust transport.

Impact

- Greater penetration of dust storms into densely populated regions.
- Increased particulate pollution in northern India.
- Reduced agricultural productivity due to soil erosion.

Climate Change Connection

- Rising temperatures increase soil dryness and evaporation.
- Heatwaves create stronger pressure gradients, generating high-speed winds.
- Erratic rainfall reduces soil moisture and vegetation cover.
- Scientific studies indicate that climate variability is making extreme dust events more frequent and intense.

Impacts of Dust Storms

Environmental Impacts

- Soil erosion and loss of fertile topsoil.
- Damage to crops and vegetation.
- Reduced visibility affecting ecosystems and wildlife.

Economic Impacts

- Agricultural losses.
- Disruptions to road, rail, and air transport.
- Damage to infrastructure and power networks.

Health Impacts

- Rise in respiratory illnesses.
- Aggravation of asthma and bronchitis.
- Increased exposure to fine particulate matter (**PM10** and **PM2.5**).

Government Initiatives

National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)

- Framework for climate adaptation and mitigation.
- Supports sustainable land and water management.

National Mission for Green India

- Focuses on afforestation and ecosystem restoration.
- Enhances carbon sinks and land resilience.

Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas

- Prepared by **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**.
- Monitors land degradation trends across India.

**National Afforestation Programme**

- Promotes restoration of degraded forests and wastelands.

Additional Info**Aravalli Range: Key Facts**

- One of the oldest geological formations in the world.
- Highest peak: **Guru Shikhar** (Rajasthan).
- Serves as a crucial ecological barrier against desertification.
- Supports biodiversity, groundwater recharge, and climate regulation.

Desertification in India

- India is a signatory to the **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**.
- India has committed to achieving **Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)**.
- Land degradation is driven by:
 - Water erosion
 - Wind erosion
 - Mining
 - Deforestation
 - Unsustainable agricultural practices

Relevant International Framework

- **UNCCD**
 - Global treaty focused on combating desertification and drought.
 - Promotes sustainable land management and ecosystem restoration.

Indian Teenagers Win Earth Prize 2026 for 'Plas-Stick' Microplastic Solution

What's the News?

- Three Indian teenagers – **Vivaan Chhawchharia, Ariana Agarwal, and Aavyana Mehta** – have won **The Earth Prize 2026** for developing **Plas-Stick**, an innovative solution to remove microplastics from water.
- The project uses **waste tamarind seeds** to create a biodegradable material that captures microplastic particles from contaminated water.
- The innovation was recognized for being affordable, environmentally friendly, and scalable, particularly for resource-constrained communities.

What is Plas-Stick?**Overview**

- **Plas-Stick** is a biodegradable powder derived from discarded **tamarind seeds**.
- When added to water:
 - It attracts and binds microplastic particles.

- The particles form larger clumps.
 - These clumps can then be removed using a handheld magnet.
- The process does not require:
 - Electricity.
 - Advanced filtration systems.
 - Harmful chemicals.

Features

- Low-cost and eco-friendly.
- Utilizes agricultural waste.
- Suitable for rural and low-resource settings.
- Prevents re-entry of collected plastic into the environment by converting it into useful products such as tiles and coasters.

Why is the Innovation Significant?**Addressing Microplastic Pollution**

- Microplastics are tiny plastic particles found in:
 - Drinking water.
 - Rivers and oceans.
 - Food chains.
 - Human tissues.
- Their small size makes them difficult to remove using conventional filtration methods.

Sustainable Approach

- Converts agricultural waste into a value-added environmental solution.
- Provides a decentralized and affordable water-cleaning technology.
- Supports circular economy principles through waste utilization.

Potential Impact

- Can improve access to cleaner drinking water.
- Particularly useful for communities lacking sophisticated water treatment infrastructure.
- Demonstrates the role of youth-led innovation in solving environmental challenges.

The Earth Prize**About the Award**

- **The Earth Prize** is a global environmental sustainability competition for school students.
- It recognizes innovative projects addressing environmental and climate challenges.
- Encourages young people to develop practical solutions with real-world impact.

Award Support

- Regional winners receive financial support to scale their innovations.
- The competition promotes entrepreneurship, sustainability, and climate action among youth.



Microplastics: A Growing Environmental Concern

What are Microplastics?

- Plastic particles generally smaller than **5 millimetres**.
- Generated from:
 - Breakdown of larger plastic waste.
 - Synthetic textiles.
 - Industrial processes.
 - Personal care products.

Environmental Impacts

- Contaminate freshwater and marine ecosystems.
- Enter food chains through aquatic organisms.
- Persist in the environment for long periods.

Health Concerns

- Detected in drinking water and human bodies.
- Research is ongoing regarding long-term health impacts.

Additional Info

Related Indian Initiatives

- **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)**
 - Promotes waste management and reduction of environmental pollution.
- **Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016**
 - Regulate plastic waste generation, collection, recycling, and disposal.
- **Ban on Identified Single-Use Plastics**
 - Implemented to reduce plastic pollution and promote sustainable alternatives.

Circular Economy

- Focuses on:
 - Reuse.
 - Recycling.
 - Resource efficiency.
 - Waste-to-value innovations.
- Plas-Stick is an example of a circular economy solution using agricultural waste.

Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary Becomes India's 100th Ramsar Site

What's the News?

- The **Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary (Surha Tal)** in **Ballia district, Uttar Pradesh**, has been designated as **India's 100th Ramsar Site**, marking a major milestone in the country's wetland conservation efforts.
- The recognition highlights the ecological importance of the wetland,

which supports a rich diversity of resident and migratory birds.

- With this addition, India has reached the landmark figure of **100 Wetlands of International Importance** under the **Ramsar Convention**.

Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary

Overview

- Located in **Ballia district, Uttar Pradesh**.
- Also known as **Surha Tal**, a large natural freshwater wetland.
- Spread over approximately **3,432 hectares (34.32 sq km)**.
- Declared a bird sanctuary in **1991**.

Ecological Importance

- Situated in the **Indo-Gangetic Plains** near the confluence zone of the **Ganga** and **Ghaghara** river systems.
- Functions as an important habitat for:
 - Resident bird species.
 - Migratory birds arriving from **Central Asia** and **Siberia**.
- Supports aquatic biodiversity including fish species and wetland vegetation.

Notable Bird Species

- **Bar-headed Goose**
- **Greylag Goose**
- **Northern Pintail**
- **Common Teal**
- **Sarus Crane**
- Various species of herons, cormorants and waterfowl.

Ramsar Convention

What is it?

- An international treaty for the **conservation and wise use of wetlands**.
- Adopted in **Ramsar, Iran**, in **1971**.
- Came into force in **1975**.

Criteria for Ramsar Designation

- Ecological uniqueness.
- Biodiversity significance.
- Habitat for threatened species.
- Support for migratory species and waterbirds.

India and Ramsar Sites

- India is a contracting party to the **Ramsar Convention**.
- India now has **100 Ramsar Sites**, one of the highest numbers in Asia.
- Wetlands play a crucial role in:
 - Flood regulation.
 - Groundwater recharge.
 - Carbon sequestration.
 - Biodiversity conservation.

Recent Additions from Uttar Pradesh

- **Shekha Jheel** became India's **99th Ramsar Site**.



- **Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary (Surha Tal)** has become the 100th Ramsar Site.

India Moves Towards E85 and E100 Fuels to Deepen Ethanol-Based Mobility

What's the News?

- The Government has proposed introducing **E85** and **E100 ethanol-blended fuels** following the nationwide rollout of **E20 fuel**.
- Concerns emerged regarding the compatibility of existing petrol vehicles with higher ethanol blends.
- The Government clarified that current petrol vehicles will continue to operate and there is no immediate phase-out of conventional petrol-compatible vehicles.
- The move is part of India's broader strategy to reduce crude oil imports, promote cleaner fuels, and support domestic agriculture through ethanol production.

Why is India Promoting Higher Ethanol Blends?

Reducing Import Dependence

- India imports over **80% of its crude oil requirements**.
- Higher ethanol usage can reduce foreign exchange outflows on petroleum imports.

Environmental Benefits

- Ethanol is a renewable biofuel.
- Can help lower:
 - Carbon monoxide emissions.
 - Hydrocarbon emissions.
 - Net greenhouse gas emissions over the fuel lifecycle.

Impact on Vehicles

Will Existing Petrol Vehicles Stop Working?

- **No.**
- Existing vehicles compatible with E20 fuel can continue operating normally.
- Higher blends such as E85 and E100 will primarily require:
 - Flex-fuel vehicles.
 - Manufacturer-certified compatible engines.

Challenges

- Ethanol has lower energy density than petrol.
- Fuel efficiency (km/litre) may decrease with higher ethanol content.
- Vehicle components may require ethanol-resistant materials due to ethanol's corrosive properties.

Flex-Fuel Vehicles (FFVs)

What are FFVs?

- Vehicles capable of running on multiple ethanol-petrol blend ratios.
- Widely used in countries such as:
 - **Brazil**
 - **United States**

Advantages

- Fuel flexibility.
- Reduced dependence on fossil fuels.
- Better utilization of domestically produced biofuels.

India's Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP)

Objectives

- Reduce crude oil imports.
- Improve energy security.
- Increase farmer income.
- Lower vehicular emissions.

Progress

- Ethanol blending in petrol has risen significantly over the last decade.
- India achieved the **20% ethanol blending target ahead of schedule** in several regions, accelerating plans for higher blends.

Additional Info

National Policy on Biofuels, 2018

- Promotes production and use of:
 - Bioethanol.
 - Biodiesel.
 - Advanced biofuels.
- Categorizes biofuels into:
 - Basic Biofuels.
 - Advanced Biofuels.

Concerns

- Water-intensive nature of sugarcane cultivation.
- Potential food-versus-fuel debate.
- Infrastructure requirements for storage, transport and distribution of high-ethanol fuels.
- Need for widespread adoption of flex-fuel vehicles.

Terms

- **E20** = 20% ethanol + 80% petrol.
- **E85** = 85% ethanol + 15% petrol.
- **E100** = Pure ethanol fuel.
- **Flex-Fuel Vehicle (FFV)** can operate on multiple ethanol-petrol blends.
- **National Policy on Biofuels** was launched in **2018**.

India Targets 155 GW Wind Energy Capacity by 2035

What's the News?

India has announced an ambitious target to increase its installed wind energy capacity to **100 GW by 2030** and **155 GW by 2035**, up from the current installed

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capacity of over **56 GW**. Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy **Pralhad Joshi** highlighted the target while emphasizing the need to strengthen domestic manufacturing, improve supply chains, and accelerate renewable energy deployment. A new digital platform, **WT-MARUT**, has also been launched to support the wind turbine ecosystem and enhance India's competitiveness in the global wind sector.

Wind Energy Expansion Targets

Key Targets

Year	Installed Wind Capacity Target
Current	56+ GW
2030	100 GW
2035	155 GW

Significance

- Wind energy is a critical pillar of India's clean energy transition.
- The target supports India's goal of achieving **500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based installed electricity capacity by 2030**.
- Increased wind deployment will help improve energy security, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, and contribute to climate commitments.

WT-MARUT Digital Platform

What is WT-MARUT?

WT-MARUT (Wind Turbine - Materials, Resources, and Utilization Tracking) is a digital platform launched to strengthen the wind energy manufacturing ecosystem.

Objectives

- Improve transparency in the wind turbine supply chain.
- Support domestic manufacturing.
- Enhance availability of critical components.
- Promote self-reliance under the Make in India initiative.
- Increase India's competitiveness in global wind equipment markets.

India's Wind Energy Sector

Current Status

- Installed wind power capacity has grown from **21.04 GW in 2014** to over **56 GW**.
- India is among the world's leading wind energy producers.
- Wind power capacity additions reached a record **6.05 GW in FY 2025-26**.

Major Wind Power States

- Tamil Nadu
- Gujarat
- Karnataka
- Maharashtra
- Rajasthan
- Andhra Pradesh

Wind Resource Potential

- More than **900 wind-monitoring stations** have been installed across the country.
- Wind resource maps have been developed at multiple hub heights (50 m to 150 m) for project planning and site identification.

Role in India's Energy Transition

National Climate and Energy Goals

- **500 GW non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030**
- **Net Zero emissions by 2070**
- Reduction in emissions intensity under India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

Why Wind Energy Matters

- Complements solar power generation.
- Helps stabilize renewable energy supply.
- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions.
- Supports green industrial growth and job creation.

Additional Info

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)

- Nodal ministry for renewable energy development in India.
- **Establishment:** Started as the Department of Non-Conventional Energy Sources (DNES) in 1982; rechristened as a full-fledged ministry in **October 2006**.
- **Key Exam Schemes:** Implements flagship government programs like **PM-KUSUM** (solarizing agriculture pumps) and the **National Green Hydrogen Mission**.
- Responsible for policies related to solar, wind, bioenergy, small hydro, and energy storage.

National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE)

- Autonomous R&D institution under MNRE.
- **Headquarters:** Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
- **Establishment:** Founded in **1998** (formerly known as the Centre for Wind Energy Technology - CWET).
- Conducts wind resource assessment, testing, certification, and research.
- **Exam Fact:** Serves as the **nodal agency for offshore wind energy** resource assessment in India.

Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC)

- International industry body promoting wind power worldwide.
- **Headquarters:** Brussels, Belgium.
- Publishes the annual *Global Wind Report* and country-specific outlooks.
- **India's Global Rank:** According to GWEC, India ranks **4th globally** in



total installed wind power capacity (behind China, the US, and Germany).

India's Major Reservoir Storage Falls to 28% Capacity

What's the News?

Water levels in India's 166 major reservoirs have declined to **28.28% of their total live storage capacity**, making the progress of the southwest monsoon crucial for irrigation, drinking water supply, and hydropower generation. The decline has been linked to a significant rainfall deficit and delayed monsoon advancement across several regions. While current storage remains above the long-term average for this period, it is lower than the corresponding level last year, raising concerns over water security in the coming months.

Reservoir Storage Status

- Total storage in 166 major reservoirs stands at **28.28% of live storage capacity**.
- Reservoir levels are **15.8% above the decadal average** for this period.
- However, storage is **8.17% lower than last year**.
- The monitored reservoirs account for about **71% of India's total reservoir storage capacity**.

Regional Performance

Region	Status
Southern India	Around 20.98% capacity; significantly lower than last year
Eastern India	Below both last year's level and normal storage
Western India	Several reservoirs approaching critical levels
Central India	Awaiting monsoon recharge to stabilize supplies

Several reservoirs, including **Bhima-Ujani, Chandan Dam, Maudaha, and Nanak Sagar**, have reported critically low storage levels.

Monsoon Becomes Critical

Rainfall Deficit

- India recorded a substantial rainfall shortfall during the early phase of the southwest monsoon.
- Reservoir depletion has been aggravated by high summer temperatures and increased water demand.
- The monsoon recently regained momentum after a prolonged pause and has begun advancing across central India,

Maharashtra, Telangana, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha.

Impact Areas

Agriculture

- Reservoirs support irrigation for millions of hectares of farmland.
- Lower storage may affect Kharif sowing if monsoon recovery remains uneven.

Drinking Water Supply

- Urban centres dependent on reservoirs face supply risks.
- Water rationing measures have already been implemented in some cities.

Hydropower Generation

- Reduced reservoir levels may constrain hydroelectric power generation, especially during peak demand periods.

Water Stress and Urban Concerns

Maharashtra and Mumbai

- Maharashtra witnessed a severe rainfall deficit during the early monsoon period.
- Mumbai's reservoir storage dropped to nearly **10% capacity**, prompting restrictions on water use for construction activities and reductions in supply to industrial and commercial users.

Southern India

- Southern reservoirs remain among the most stressed in the country.
- Several river basins are experiencing below-normal storage levels, increasing dependence on timely monsoon rainfall.

Additional Info

Central Water Commission (CWC)

- Established in **1945**.
- Functions under the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**.
- Apex technical organization for:
 - Water resource management.
 - Flood forecasting.
 - Reservoir monitoring.
 - Hydrological data collection.
- Publishes the weekly **Reservoir Level and Storage Bulletin**.

Importance of Reservoirs

Reservoirs support:

- Irrigation
- Drinking water supply
- Hydroelectric power generation
- Flood moderation
- Industrial water requirements

Related Initiatives

Jal Shakti Abhiyan

- Nationwide water conservation campaign.



- Focuses on rainwater harvesting, watershed development, and groundwater recharge.

Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)

- Objective: **"Har Khet Ko Pani"**
- Promotes efficient irrigation and water-use efficiency.

Atal Bhujal Yojana

- Community-led groundwater management programme.
- Focuses on sustainable groundwater utilization in water-stressed regions.

National Biodiversity Authority Releases SOP for Notification of Threatened Species

What's the News?

The **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)** has released a **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** for the scientific identification, assessment and notification of threatened species by States and Union Territories under **Section 38 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002**. The SOP establishes a uniform, transparent and science-based framework to strengthen species conservation and prevent biodiversity loss across the country.

SOP for Threatened Species

Objectives

- Establish a standardized process for identifying and notifying threatened species.
- Promote evidence-based conservation using scientific data and traditional knowledge.
- Strengthen coordination among States, Union Territories and biodiversity institutions.
- Facilitate timely conservation and recovery measures for threatened species.

Features

- Provides a **step-by-step framework** covering:
 - Scientific assessment.
 - Stakeholder consultations.
 - Validation by experts.
 - Recommendation and notification.
 - Conservation planning.
 - Monitoring and periodic review.
- Encourages the use of:
 - Best available scientific evidence.
 - Field-based assessments.
 - Indigenous and traditional knowledge.
- Involves:

- State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs).
- Union Territory Biodiversity Councils.
- Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs).
- Botanical Survey of India (BSI).
- Zoological Survey of India (ZSI).
- Academic and research institutions.

Legal Framework

Section 38 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002

- Empowers the **Central Government**, in consultation with the concerned State Government, to notify species that are:
 - On the verge of extinction, or
 - Likely to become extinct in the near future.
- Enables:
 - Regulation or prohibition of collection.
 - Rehabilitation and conservation measures.
- The Central Government may delegate these powers to State Governments.

Current Status

- **159 plant species** and **173 animal species** have been notified as threatened.
- These notifications cover **17 States** and **3 Union Territories**.
- The SOP aims to expand scientific identification and improve conservation planning nationwide.

Additional Info

- **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)**
 - Statutory body established under the **Biological Diversity Act, 2002**.
 - Established: **2003**.
 - Headquarters: **Chennai, Tamil Nadu**.
 - Functions under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.
- **Biological Diversity Act, 2002**
 - Objectives:
 - Conservation of biological diversity.
 - Sustainable use of biological resources.
 - Fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from biological resources (Access and Benefit Sharing-ABS).
- **Three-tier Biodiversity Governance**
 - **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)** – National level.



- **State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs)** – State level.
- **Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs)** – Local body level.
- **Related Organisations**
 - **Botanical Survey of India (BSI)** – Surveys and documents plant diversity.
 - **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)** – Surveys and documents faunal diversity.

All India Tiger Estimation (AITE) 2026 Underway

What's the News?

The **6th cycle of the All India Tiger Estimation (AITE) 2026**, the world's largest scientific wildlife monitoring exercise, is underway across India. Conducted every four years by the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** in collaboration with the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)** and State Forest Departments, the exercise assesses tiger populations, co-predators, prey species, and habitat health using advanced scientific methods. The final report is expected in **2027**.

All India Tiger Estimation (AITE)

- National tiger population assessment conducted every **four years**.
- **6th Cycle:** AITE 2026.
- **Implementing Agencies:**
 - National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).
 - Wildlife Institute of India (WII).
 - State Forest Departments.
- Considered the **world's largest camera trap-based wildlife survey**.

Objectives

- Estimate the national tiger population.
- Assess:
 - Co-predators (leopards, dholes, etc.).
 - Prey abundance.
 - Habitat quality.
 - Human disturbances.
- Support evidence-based wildlife conservation and management.
- Monitor long-term population trends and habitat connectivity.

Methodology

The estimation follows a **multi-phase scientific protocol**:

Phase I

- Carnivore sign survey.
- Habitat assessment.

- Human disturbance mapping.

Phase II

- Line transect surveys.
- Estimation of prey density.

Phase III

- Camera trapping across identified grids.
- Individual tiger identification using stripe patterns.

Phase IV

- Statistical analysis integrating:
 - Camera trap data.
 - Field observations.
 - GIS and occupancy models.
 - DNA evidence (where available).

Technologies Used

- Camera traps.
- **M-StrIPES** (Monitoring System for Tigers-Intensive Protection and Ecological Status).
- GPS-enabled field surveys.
- GIS and remote sensing.
- DNA analysis of scat and hair samples.
- Occupancy modelling and advanced statistical analysis.

Previous Tiger Estimation (2022)

- Estimated tiger population: **3,682**.
- India supports approximately **75% of the global wild tiger population**.
- **Madhya Pradesh** recorded the highest number of tigers (**785**), followed by **Karnataka** (**563**) and **Uttarakhand** (**560**).

Additional Info

National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)

- **Established:** 2005.
- **Statutory basis:** Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (amended in 2006).
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
- **Functions:**
 - Oversight of Project Tiger.
 - Approval and monitoring of Tiger Conservation Plans.
 - Technical and financial support to Tiger Reserves.
 - Coordination of the All India Tiger Estimation.

Wildlife Institute of India (WII)

- **Established:** 1982.
- **Headquarters:** Dehradun, Uttarakhand.
- Autonomous institution under **MoEFCC**.
- Provides scientific and technical support for wildlife research and monitoring, including AITE.

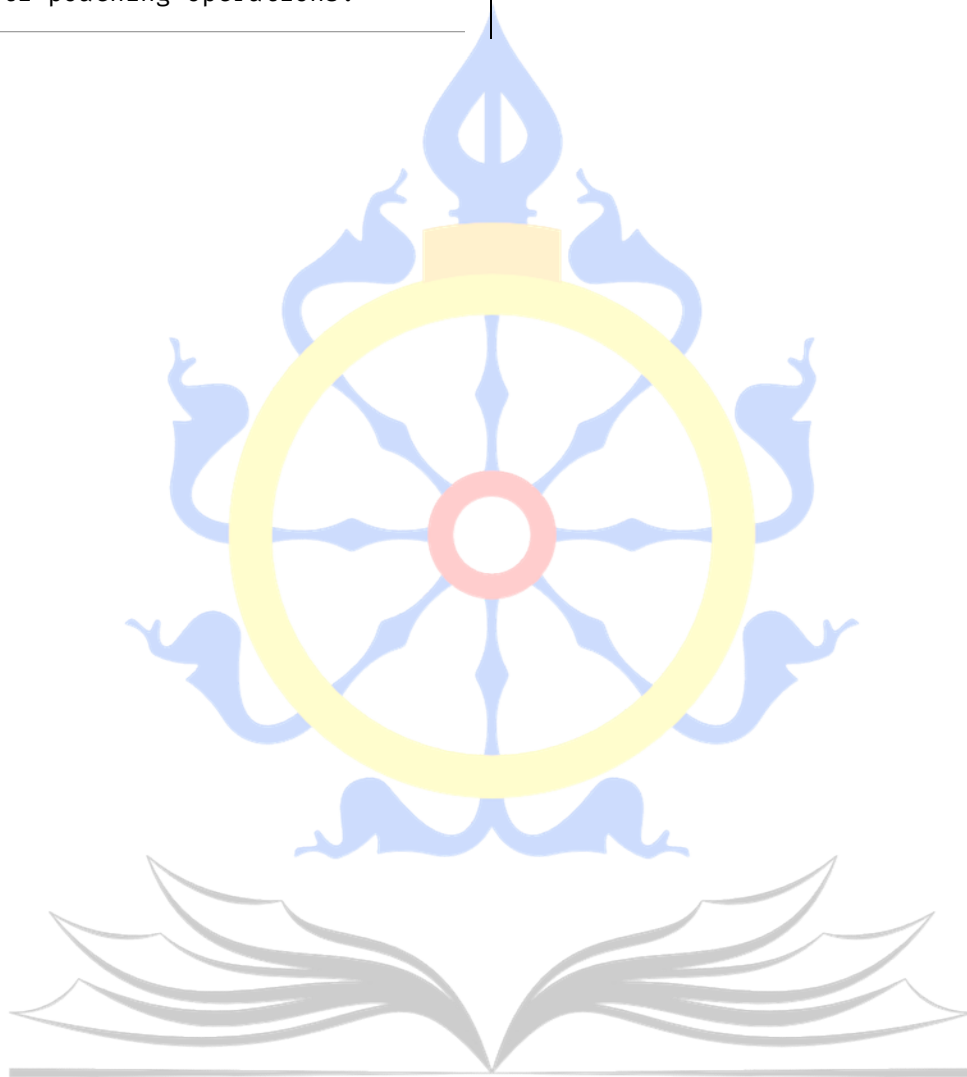
Project Tiger

- **Launched:** 1973.
- **Objective:**

- Ensure a viable population of tigers in their natural habitats.
- Protect associated ecosystems and biodiversity.

M-STrIPES

- **Full Form:** Monitoring System for Tigers – Intensive Protection and Ecological Status.
- A GIS-enabled software and mobile-based monitoring system used for:
 - Patrolling.
 - Wildlife monitoring.
 - Habitat management.
 - Anti-poaching operations.



Health & Pharma

NFHS-6 Records Rise in Obesity and High Blood Sugar Levels

What's the News?

- Findings from **National Family Health Survey-6 (NFHS-6)** indicate a sharp increase in **obesity** and **high blood sugar levels** among Indian adults.
- The survey highlights the growing burden of **Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)** alongside persistent public health challenges.
- The trend reflects changing dietary patterns, sedentary lifestyles, urbanization, and an ageing population, posing significant challenges for India's healthcare system.

NFHS-6 Findings on Obesity and Blood Sugar

Obesity Trends

- The proportion of adults classified as **overweight or obese (BMI ≥ 25 kg/m²)** has increased substantially compared to previous survey rounds.
- The rise has been observed among:
 - Men and women.
 - Urban and rural populations.
 - Most states and Union Territories.
- Urban populations continue to report higher obesity prevalence, though rural areas are witnessing faster growth.

High Blood Sugar Levels

- The survey recorded an increase in adults with **elevated blood sugar levels**, indicating a growing risk of:
 - Diabetes Mellitus.
 - Cardiovascular diseases.
 - Kidney disorders.
- The rise was observed across age groups, with prevalence generally increasing with age.

Why is the Trend Concerning?

Health Impact

- Obesity is a major risk factor for:
 - Type-2 Diabetes.
 - Hypertension.
 - Heart Disease.
 - Stroke.
 - Certain Cancers.
- High blood sugar levels can lead to:
 - Diabetes-related complications.
 - Vision impairment.
 - Kidney failure.
 - Nerve damage.

Economic Impact

- Increased healthcare expenditure on chronic diseases.
- Loss of productivity due to illness and disability.
- Greater pressure on public health infrastructure.

National Family Health Survey (NFHS) About NFHS

- A large-scale, multi-round survey providing data on:
 - Population.
 - Health.
 - Nutrition.
 - Family Welfare.
- Conducted under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)**.
- Implemented by the **International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai**.

Key Areas Covered

- Maternal and Child Health.
- Nutrition Status.
- Fertility Indicators.
- Immunisation.
- Anaemia.
- Non-Communicable Disease Risk Factors.
- Women's Empowerment.

Government Initiatives to Address NCDs

National Programme for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NCD)

- Focuses on:
 - Early screening.
 - Diagnosis.
 - Management of NCDs.
 - Health promotion activities.

Ayushman Bharat

- Strengthens primary healthcare through **Ayushman Arogya Mandirs**.
- Promotes screening for:
 - Diabetes.
 - Hypertension.
 - Common cancers.

Fit India Movement

- Encourages physical activity and healthy lifestyles.
- Promotes behavioural changes to reduce lifestyle-related diseases.

Additional Info

Body Mass Index (BMI)

- Indicator used to assess nutritional status.
- Formula:
 - $\text{Weight (kg)} \div \text{Height}^2 \text{ (m}^2\text{)}$
- WHO Classification:
 - Underweight: Below 18.5

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- Normal: 18.5–24.9
- Overweight: 25–29.9
- Obese: 30 and above

Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

- Diseases that are not transmitted from person to person.
- Major NCDs include:
 - Diabetes.
 - Cardiovascular Diseases.
 - Cancer.
 - Chronic Respiratory Diseases.
- Account for nearly two-thirds of deaths in India.

India Validates First Indigenous HPV Test for Cervical Cancer Screening

What's the News?

- Researchers from **AIIMS New Delhi**, **ICMR**, and the **WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)** have validated **Truenat HR-HPV-Plus**, India's first internationally validated indigenous point-of-care (PoC) HPV test.
- Developed by **Molbio Diagnostics**, the test meets global standards for cervical cancer screening, offering an affordable and scalable tool to screen millions of women above 30 years of age.

Truenat HR-HPV-Plus

- **High Accuracy:** Detects eight high-risk HPV types responsible for nearly **95%** of cervical cancer cases.
- **Point-of-Care (PoC) Testing:** Designed for district and sub-district healthcare facilities, requiring minimal training and no sophisticated central laboratory infrastructure.
- **Infrastructure Leverage:** Utilizes the existing **Truenat platform**, already widely deployed across India for infectious disease testing, ensuring rapid integration into national screening programs.
- **Global Benchmark:** Among four indigenous assays evaluated, it was the only one to fully satisfy **WHO** and **IARC** validation criteria for reproducibility and sensitivity.

Why is Cervical Cancer Screening Important?

- **Cervical cancer** is one of the leading causes of cancer-related deaths among women in India.
- Persistent infection with high-risk HPV types is responsible for the vast majority of cervical cancer cases.

- Early detection through HPV screening can:
 - Identify pre-cancerous lesions before cancer develops.
 - Reduce mortality through timely treatment.
 - Improve women's health outcomes significantly.

Cervical Cancer in India: Key Facts

- Cervical cancer remains among the most common cancers affecting Indian women.
- India accounts for a significant share of the global cervical cancer burden.
- The disease is largely preventable through:
 - **HPV vaccination.**
 - Regular HPV-based screening.
 - Early treatment of pre-cancerous conditions.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

- A group of more than 200 related viruses.
- Transmitted primarily through sexual contact.
- High-risk HPV types, especially **HPV-16** and **HPV-18**, are responsible for most cervical cancer cases.

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)

- Apex body for biomedical research in India.
- Functions under the **Department of Health Research**, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- Established in **1911** as the Indian Research Fund Association.
- Headquarters: **New Delhi**.

ICMR and Gates Foundation Launch Anaemia Challenge

What's the News?

- The **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** and the **Gates Foundation** have launched the **"Innovations for Prevention and Management of Anaemia Challenge."**
- The initiative aims to support innovative, scalable, and evidence-based solutions to reduce the burden of **anaemia**, a major public health challenge in India.
- The challenge offers a funding pool of **₹1 crore** to encourage researchers, startups, academic institutions, and innovators to develop effective interventions.
- The focus is on improving prevention, diagnosis, management, and monitoring of anaemia, particularly among vulnerable population groups.

Anaemia Challenge

Objectives

- Promote innovation in:
 - Early detection of anaemia.
 - Prevention strategies.
 - Treatment adherence.
 - Monitoring and surveillance systems.
- Identify cost-effective and scalable solutions suitable for diverse Indian settings.
- Strengthen evidence-based policymaking and programme implementation.
- Accelerate progress towards reducing anaemia prevalence across the country.

Who Can Participate?

- Researchers and scientists.
- Academic and research institutions.
- Start-ups and innovators.
- Healthcare organizations.
- Technology developers working in public health and nutrition.

Why is Anaemia a Major Concern?

- Anaemia occurs when the blood has insufficient healthy red blood cells or haemoglobin to carry adequate oxygen to body tissues.
- It affects:
 - Children
 - Adolescent girls
 - Pregnant women
 - Women of reproductive age
- Consequences include:
 - Reduced cognitive development.
 - Lower productivity.
 - Increased maternal and child health risks.
 - Poor educational outcomes.

National Health Indicators

- According to **National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5)**:
 - Around **67.1% of children (6–59 months)** are anaemic.
 - Around **57% of women (15–49 years)** are anaemic.
 - Around **25% of men (15–49 years)** are anaemic.
- Anaemia remains one of India's most persistent nutritional and public health challenges.

Additional Info

Anaemia

- A condition characterized by a deficiency of haemoglobin or red blood cells.
- Common causes:
 - Iron deficiency.
 - Folic acid deficiency.
 - Vitamin B12 deficiency.
 - Infections and chronic diseases.

- Genetic disorders such as thalassemia and sickle cell disease.

Anaemia Mukh Bharat (AMB)

- Launched under the **POSHAN Abhiyaan** framework.
- Nodal Ministry: **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- Target Groups:
 - Children (6–59 months)
 - School-age children
 - Adolescents
 - Pregnant women
 - Lactating mothers
 - Women of reproductive age
- Strategy based on the **6x6x6 framework**:
 - Six target beneficiaries.
 - Six interventions.
 - Six institutional mechanisms.

POSHAN Abhiyaan

- Launched to improve nutritional outcomes among:
 - Children
 - Pregnant women
 - Lactating mothers
 - Adolescent girls
- Focuses on reducing:
 - Stunting
 - Undernutrition
 - Low birth weight
 - Anaemia

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)

- Apex body for biomedical research in India.
- Established in **1911** as the Indian Research Fund Association.
- Functions under the **Department of Health Research**, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Gates Foundation

- Global philanthropic organization founded by **Bill Gates** and **Melinda French Gates**.
- Works in:
 - Global health
 - Nutrition
 - Agricultural development
 - Poverty alleviation
 - Financial inclusion

FSSAI Cracks Down on Misleading “Healthy”, “Organic” and “Zero Maida” Food Claims

What's the News?

The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** has issued notices to several food brands over potentially misleading claims such as “healthy”, “organic”, “zero maida”, “natural”, and similar labels on food products. The

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regulator has directed companies to substantiate such claims with scientific evidence and ensure compliance with food labelling regulations. The move aims to protect consumers from deceptive marketing practices and improve transparency in food advertising.

FSSAI's Regulatory Action

Developments

- Notices issued to multiple food brands for questionable health and nutrition claims.
- Companies asked to provide scientific justification and supporting documentation.
- Scrutiny focused on labels and advertisements that may mislead consumers regarding nutritional value or ingredient composition.
- Part of FSSAI's broader effort to strengthen food safety and consumer awareness.

Why the Action?

- Growing use of marketing terms without clear regulatory backing.
- Rising consumer preference for healthy and organic foods.
- Risk of consumers making purchasing decisions based on unverified claims.

Food Claims Under Scrutiny

"Healthy" Claims

Products marketed as "healthy" must satisfy prescribed nutritional standards and should not mislead consumers regarding their health benefits.

"Organic" Claims

- Only products complying with approved organic certification systems can use the term "organic".
- Claims must be backed by valid certification and traceability mechanisms.

"Zero Maida" Claims

- Products advertised as "zero maida" must accurately reflect ingredient composition.
- Labels should not create a false impression about nutritional superiority without evidence.

Other Claims

Regulators are also examining claims such as:

- Natural
- Pure
- Nutritious
- High-protein
- Immunity-boosting
- Preservative-free

Food Labelling Regulations in India

Food Safety and Standards (Advertising and Claims) Regulations, 2018

The regulations aim to ensure that:

- Claims are truthful and scientifically substantiated.
- Advertisements do not mislead consumers.
- Comparative claims are fair and verifiable.
- Nutritional and health claims follow prescribed standards.

Key Principles

- No false or exaggerated claims.
- Scientific evidence must support health-related statements.
- Labels should provide clear and accurate information.
- Consumer interests must be protected.

Why Accurate Food Labelling Matters

Consumer Protection

- Enables informed purchasing decisions.
- Prevents deceptive marketing.
- Reduces misinformation regarding nutrition and health benefits.

Public Health

- Encourages transparency in the food industry.
- Helps consumers manage dietary requirements.
- Supports efforts to combat lifestyle diseases linked to unhealthy diets.

Market Fairness

- Creates a level playing field for manufacturers.
- Rewards genuinely compliant and certified products.
- Promotes responsible advertising practices.

Organic Food Certification in India

Participatory Guarantee System (PGS-India)

- Quality assurance initiative for organic products.
- Operated under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- Suitable primarily for small and marginal farmers.

National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)

- Implemented by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).
- Provides standards and certification for organic products.
- Facilitates domestic and export market recognition.

Additional Info

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)

- Established under the **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006**.
- Functions under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- Headquarters: New Delhi.

Functions of FSSAI

- Formulate food safety standards.
- Regulate manufacture, storage, distribution, sale, and import of food.
- Monitor food quality and safety.
- Promote consumer awareness regarding food safety and nutrition.

Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006

Key objectives:

- Consolidate food-related laws.
- Establish a single food regulatory authority.
- Ensure availability of safe and wholesome food.
- Protect consumer interests.

Eat Right India Initiative

- Flagship movement launched by FSSAI.
- Promotes:
 - Safe food
 - Healthy diets
 - Sustainable food practices

Doctor's Prescription Made Mandatory for Cough Syrups and Other Syrup Medicines

What's the News?

The Central Government has amended the **Drugs Rules, 1945**, making a **doctor's prescription mandatory for the purchase of cough syrups and other syrup-based medicines**. The move ends their over-the-counter (OTC) sale and requires dispensing only through licensed pharmacies. The decision aims to strengthen regulatory oversight, curb misuse, and improve patient safety.

What Has Changed?

End of Over-the-Counter Sale

- Syrup-based medicines, including cough syrups, can no longer be freely sold without a prescription.
- Consumers must now present a valid prescription from a registered medical practitioner.
- Sales must be routed through licensed pharmacies under pharmacist supervision.

Amendment to Drugs Rules, 1945

- The government has removed "**syrup**" from the exemptions provided under **Schedule K** of the Drugs Rules, 1945.

- Earlier, certain cough syrups could be sold under relaxed conditions, especially in small settlements lacking pharmacy infrastructure.
- The amendment brings syrup formulations under stricter regulatory control.

Why Was the Decision Taken?

Safety Concerns

- Authorities have sought tighter regulation following incidents involving contaminated cough syrups.
- Contaminated Indian-made cough syrups were linked to the deaths of more than **140 children** in several countries since 2022, leading to global scrutiny of India's pharmaceutical sector.

Preventing Misuse

- Medical experts have highlighted concerns regarding:
 - Self-medication
 - Overuse and misuse of cough syrups
 - Delayed diagnosis of underlying diseases
 - Potential abuse of certain formulations containing sedative ingredients.

Schedule K of Drugs Rules

What is Schedule K?

- Schedule K is a part of the **Drugs Rules, 1945**.
- It lists categories of medicines exempt from certain provisions related to:
 - Sale
 - Distribution
 - Licensing requirements
- These exemptions were primarily intended to improve medicine availability in remote and underserved areas.

Impact of the Amendment

- Syrup formulations are no longer covered under Schedule K exemptions.
- Their sale now requires:
 - Licensed pharmacy outlets.
 - Prescription by a registered medical practitioner.
 - Compliance with the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics framework.

Additional Info

Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940

- Principal legislation governing:
 - Import
 - Manufacture
 - Distribution
 - Sale of drugs and cosmetics in India.



Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)

- National regulatory authority for pharmaceuticals and medical devices.
- Headed by the **Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI)**.
- Functions under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.

Recent Regulatory Measures on Cough Syrups

- Mandatory testing of exported cough syrups.
- Large-scale inspections of manufacturing facilities.
- Strengthening Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) compliance.
- Increased surveillance following contamination-related incidents.

Indian Pharmacopoeia 2026 Becomes First in the World to Set Exclusive Standards for Blood

What's the News?

The **Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP) 2026** has become the **first pharmacopoeia in the world** to establish **exclusive standards for blood and blood components**. The new standards, developed by the **Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC)**, aim to strengthen the quality, safety and consistency of blood transfusion services across India. The standards were highlighted during a national conference organised by the IPC to facilitate their implementation.

What is Indian Pharmacopoeia 2026?

- The **10th edition** of the Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP), India's official book of drug standards.
- Published by the **Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC)** under the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**.
- Prescribes legally recognised standards for:
 - Identity
 - Purity
 - Strength
 - Quality of medicines and pharmaceutical substances.
- Includes **121 new monographs**, taking the total to **3,340 monographs**.
- For the first time, it introduces **20 new monographs** and **2 revised monographs** exclusively for blood and blood components.

Exclusive Standards for Blood

The newly introduced standards cover blood and major blood components such as:

- Whole Blood
- Packed Red Blood Cells (PRBC)

- Platelet Concentrate
- Fresh Frozen Plasma (FFP)
- Cryoprecipitate

The standards prescribe specifications for:

- Collection and processing.
- Storage conditions.
- Quality control testing.
- Sterility.
- Identity and potency.
- Labelling and handling.

These standards are expected to ensure uniform quality across blood banks and transfusion services.

Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC)

- Autonomous institution under the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**.
- Headquarters: **Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh**.
- Functions:
 - Publishes the Indian Pharmacopoeia.
 - Develops **Indian Pharmacopoeia Reference Standards (IPRS)**.
 - Publishes the **National Formulary of India (NFI)**.
 - Serves as the **National Coordination Centre** for the **Pharmacovigilance Programme of India (PvPI)**.
 - Promotes quality standards for medicines and healthcare products.

Additional Info

What is a Pharmacopoeia?

- An officially recognised compendium prescribing standards for:
 - Medicines.
 - Pharmaceutical ingredients.
 - Biological products.
- Provides legally enforceable quality specifications for manufacture, testing and storage.

Blood Components

- **Whole Blood:** Blood collected directly from a donor.
- **Packed Red Blood Cells (PRBC):** Used for treating severe anaemia and blood loss.
- **Platelets:** Used in bleeding disorders and cancer treatment.
- **Fresh Frozen Plasma (FFP):** Rich in clotting factors; used in coagulation disorders.
- **Cryoprecipitate:** Contains fibrinogen and clotting factors; used in specific bleeding disorders.

Related Initiatives

- **Haemovigilance Programme of India (HvPI)**
 - Launched in **2012**.

- Monitors adverse reactions related to blood transfusion.
- Coordinated by the **Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission**.
- **Pharmacovigilance Programme of India (PvPI)**
 - Monitors adverse drug reactions (ADRs).
 - IPC serves as the National Coordination Centre.

Legal Framework

- **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940**
 - Regulates import, manufacture, distribution and sale of drugs in India.
- **Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945**
 - Prescribe standards for blood banks and blood products.
- The blood standards in IP 2026 support implementation of the **Drugs and Cosmetics (Second Amendment) Rules, 2020**.

Health and Pharmaceutical Updates

What's the News?

The Government of India has announced three major initiatives to strengthen the country's public health and pharmaceutical ecosystem:

1. **Air Suvidha 2.0** has been introduced as a digital health declaration system for international travellers entering India.
2. The **Pharma Jan Samadhan** grievance portal has been integrated with the **Pharma Sahi Daam** price-check platform to improve access to affordable medicines and grievance redressal.
3. The Centre has expanded the **QR code-based traceability system** to cover more categories of critical medicines, including vaccines, cancer drugs and narcotic medicines, to curb counterfeit drugs and strengthen supply chain transparency.

Air Suvidha 2.0

- **Air Suvidha 2.0** is a digital self-declaration portal for international passengers arriving in India.
- It enables risk-based health screening during outbreaks of communicable diseases.
- The system replaces manual paperwork with an integrated digital platform to facilitate faster airport clearance and disease surveillance.

Features

- Online submission of health declaration before arrival.

- Upload of relevant health or travel documents, if required.
- Generation of a QR code/acknowledgement after successful submission.
- Integrated with airport health authorities for efficient verification.
- Can be activated for disease-specific surveillance depending on public health requirements.

Objectives

- Early detection of imported infectious diseases.
- Strengthen border health surveillance.
- Reduce passenger processing time.
- Improve coordination between health authorities and immigration agencies.

Pharma Jan Samadhan-Sahji Daam

Integration

The Department of Pharmaceuticals has integrated:

- **Pharma Jan Samadhan** – Public grievance redressal portal.
- **Pharma Sahi Daam** – Medicine price verification portal.

The integration creates a single digital platform for medicine price transparency and consumer grievance resolution.

Pharma Jan Samadhan

- Enables citizens to lodge complaints related to:
 - Overpricing of medicines.
 - Non-availability of essential medicines.
 - Quality-related issues.
 - Other pharmaceutical grievances.

Pharma Sahi Daam

- Allows consumers to:
 - Verify ceiling prices of scheduled medicines.
 - Compare medicine prices.
 - Check Maximum Retail Price (MRP).
 - Identify medicines regulated under the **Drug Price Control Order (DPCO)**.

Benefits

- Single-window grievance redressal.
- Improved consumer awareness.
- Better enforcement of price regulations.
- Increased transparency in pharmaceutical pricing.

Expansion of QR Codes on Critical Medicines

The Government has expanded mandatory **QR code-based authentication** to additional categories of high-risk medicines.

**Medicines Covered**

- Vaccines
- Cancer medicines
- Narcotic and psychotropic medicines
- Other critical life-saving drugs

Information Available Through QR Codes

- Product name
- Manufacturer details
- Batch number
- Manufacturing date
- Expiry date
- Unique product identification

Objectives

- Prevent counterfeit and spurious medicines.
- Enable end-to-end supply chain traceability.
- Improve patient safety.
- Strengthen regulatory oversight.
- Facilitate quick product recalls when necessary.

National Pharmaceutical Pricing Framework**National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)****Established:** 1997**Ministry:** Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers**Functions**

- Fixes and revises prices of scheduled medicines.
- Monitors prices of non-scheduled medicines.
- Enforces provisions of the Drug Price Control Order (DPCO).
- Protects consumer interests while ensuring medicine availability.

Additional Info**Drug Price Control Order (DPCO)**

- Issued under the **Essential Commodities Act, 1955**.
- Implemented by the **Department of Pharmaceuticals**.
- Empowers NPPA to regulate prices of scheduled medicines included in the **National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)**.

National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)

- Lists medicines considered essential for addressing priority healthcare needs.
- Forms the basis for price regulation under DPCO.

Aarogya Setu 2.0 Launched as Personal Health Record App under ABDM**What's the News?**

Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda launched Aarogya Setu 2.0 along with linked digital health initiatives at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. The application, originally introduced in 2020 as a COVID-19 contact-tracing tool, has been redesigned into a Personal Health Record (PHR) application under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM). The launch also included the National Health Claims Exchange (NHCX), the Drug Registry, Common LOINC Codes for India (CLCI), and the Bharat Health Terminology Service (BHTS).

Aarogya Setu 2.0

- Redesigned from a COVID-19 contact-tracing app into a **national digital health platform**.
- Developed under the **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)**.
- Enables citizens to securely create, manage and share **Personal Health Records (PHR)** through consent-based data exchange.
- Integrated with **ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account)** for seamless digital healthcare access.

Features

- Create and manage **ABHA** accounts.
- Store and access Personal Health Records.
- Consent-based sharing of medical records.
- AI-assisted digitisation of medical documents.
- Discover nearby:
 - Hospitals
 - Doctors
 - Blood banks
 - Ambulance services
 - Jan Aushadhi Kendras
- Scan-and-share registration at hospitals.
- Access **PM-JAY** services.
- Teleconsultation support through the **Unified Health Interface (UHI)**.
- Personalized health insights and medication reminders.
- Family health record management.

Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)

- **Launched:** 2021.
- **Implementing Agency:** National Health Authority (NHA).
- **Objective:**
 - Create a national digital health ecosystem.



- Enable secure and interoperable exchange of health information.
- Improve accessibility, efficiency and continuity of healthcare services.

Core Building Blocks

- ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account).
- Healthcare Professional Registry (HPR).
- Health Facility Registry (HFR).
- Personal Health Records (PHR).
- Unified Health Interface (UHI).
- Health Information Exchange & Consent Manager (HIE-CM).

National Health Claims Exchange and Allied Systems

NHCX was launched to standardise health insurance claims processing between hospitals and insurers, aiming for faster settlement and fewer errors. Alongside it, the Drug Registry will maintain standardised drug data, CLCI will harmonise lab/diagnostic coding, and BHTS will provide a unified medical terminology backbone for India's health IT systems.

Important Terms

- **ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account):** Unique digital health ID for every citizen.
- **PHR (Personal Health Record):** Citizen-controlled digital repository of medical records.
- **NHCX (National Health Claims Exchange):** Facilitates interoperable and paperless processing of health insurance claims.
- **UHI (Unified Health Interface):** Open digital network connecting patients with healthcare providers.

Recent ABDM Progress

- Over **90 crore ABHA accounts** have been created.
- More than **4.8 lakh health facilities** registered.
- More than **9.5 lakh doctors** registered under the digital ecosystem.

Revised Anaemia Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan Guidelines Released What's the News?

The Union Government has released the **revised Operational Guidelines for the Anaemia Mukht Bharat (AMB) Abhiyaan**, transforming the existing programme into a more comprehensive, technology-enabled initiative. The revised strategy shifts the focus from primarily **iron supplementation** to **testing, treatment, digital tracking, healthy diets, and community participation**, introducing a

new **7×7×7 framework** in place of the earlier **6×6×6 strategy**.

7×7×7 Strategy

The revised guidelines expand the earlier framework by adding:

- **7 Beneficiary Groups** (earlier 6).
- **7 Key Interventions** (earlier 6).
- **7 Institutional Mechanisms** (earlier 6).

The objective is to strengthen prevention, early diagnosis, therapeutic management, and long-term monitoring of anaemia.

Seven Beneficiary Groups

The revised strategy covers:

1. Children (6–59 months).
2. Children (5–9 years).
3. Adolescents (10–19 years).
4. Women of reproductive age (20–24 years and beyond, as applicable).
5. Pregnant women.
6. Lactating mothers.
7. **Low Birth Weight (LBW) babies (0–6 months)** (*newly added*).

Seven Key Interventions

- Iron and Folic Acid (IFA) supplementation.
- Deworming.
- Testing and treatment of anaemia.
- Behaviour Change Communication (BCC).
- Fortification and nutrition-sensitive interventions.
- Addressing non-nutritional causes of anaemia.
- **"Eating Right" campaign** promoting iron-rich and diversified diets (*new intervention*).

Service Delivery Model

Shift from T3 to T4

The previous **T3 approach**:

- Test.
- Treat.
- Talk.

has been upgraded to the **T4 model**:

- Test.
- Treat.
- Talk.
- **Track** (digital monitoring and follow-up).

The revised guidelines emphasise:

- Early haemoglobin testing.
- Case-based management.
- Digital tracking of beneficiaries.
- Timely follow-up and treatment completion.

Additional Info

Anaemia Mukht Bharat (AMB)

- **Launched:** 2018.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

- **Implemented under:** National Health Mission (NHM).
- **Overall Goal:** Reduce anaemia prevalence by **3 percentage points annually** among target groups.

Earlier 6×6×6 Strategy

- 6 beneficiary groups.
- 6 interventions.
- 6 institutional mechanisms.

New Additions

- **New beneficiary:** Low Birth Weight (LBW) babies (0–6 months).
- **New intervention:** "Eating Right" campaign.
- **New institutional mechanism:** Strengthened monitoring and evaluation through digital tracking.

SUMAN Roadmap 2030: National Strategy for Safe Motherhood and Newborn Health

What's the News?

The Union Government has launched the **SUMAN Roadmap 2030**, a comprehensive national framework to accelerate reductions in **maternal, neonatal, and infant mortality** and achieve the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030**. The roadmap adopts a life-cycle approach, strengthens maternal and newborn healthcare services, and focuses on targeted interventions in high-burden districts while promoting universal access to quality maternal healthcare.

SUMAN Roadmap 2030

- Developed by the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare** under the **RMNCHA+N** framework.
- Provides evidence-based interventions tailored to States and districts.
- Covers the entire continuum of care:
 - Pre-pregnancy care.
 - Antenatal care.
 - Intrapartum (delivery) care.
 - Postnatal care.
- Seeks to eliminate preventable maternal and newborn deaths through improved service delivery.

Targets (2030)

- **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR):** Below **70 per 100,000 live births**.
- Further reduce:
 - Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR).
 - Infant Mortality Rate (IMR).
- Achieve:
 - Universal maternal and newborn health services.
 - Zero preventable maternal and newborn deaths.

Major Features

- Targeted implementation in **130 districts** across **13 high-focus States**:
 - Assam
 - Bihar
 - Chhattisgarh
 - Haryana
 - Jharkhand
 - Karnataka
 - Madhya Pradesh
 - Odisha
 - Punjab
 - Rajasthan
 - Uttar Pradesh
 - Uttarakhand
 - West Bengal
- Dedicated **SUMAN Package** for pregnant women.
- Early pregnancy registration and comprehensive antenatal care.
- Institutional deliveries and postnatal follow-up.
- Bi-weekly **ASHA** home visits during the eighth and ninth months of pregnancy.
- Financial assistance for designated caregivers during the postnatal period.
- Strengthened referral transport and emergency obstetric care.
- Establishment of:
 - Birth Waiting Homes.
 - Maternal & Child Health Wings.
 - Obstetric High Dependency Units (HDUs).
 - Intensive Care Units (ICUs) in underserved regions.

Community & Technology Initiatives

- **SUMAN Panchayat** to promote community participation and local accountability.
- Digital monitoring through the **JANANI Portal**.
- AI-enabled labour rooms.
- Strengthened surveillance of high-risk pregnancies.
- Expanded nutrition interventions to address maternal anaemia.
- Climate-responsive planning for pregnant women and newborns.
- Wider deployment of **Non-Pneumatic Anti-Shock Garments (NASG)** for managing obstetric haemorrhage.

Additional Info

About SUMAN Scheme

- **SUMAN (Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan)** was launched in **2019**.
- Ensures:
 - Free, respectful and quality maternal healthcare.



- Zero tolerance for denial of services at public health facilities.
- Free transport, diagnostics, medicines and delivery care.
- Free care for sick newborns.

RMNCHA+N Framework

- Stands for:
 - Reproductive
 - Maternal
 - Newborn
 - Child
 - Adolescent Health
 - + Nutrition
- Integrates health and nutrition interventions across different life stages.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3

- **Goal:** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- **Target 3.1:** Reduce the global Maternal Mortality Ratio to **less than 70 per 100,000 live births** by 2030.



Education

Centre Temporarily Blocks Telegram Ahead of NEET-UG Re-Examination

What's the News?

The Central Government has temporarily blocked access to the messaging platform Telegram across India until the completion of the NEET-UG 2026 re-examination. The move was taken as a precautionary measure to prevent the circulation of leaked question papers, answer keys, and other exam-related misinformation through online channels. The restriction will remain in force until the re-examination process is completed.

Why Was Telegram Blocked?

- Authorities observed that Telegram channels and groups were allegedly being used to circulate leaked examination material and facilitate unfair practices.
- The temporary suspension aims to:
 - Maintain the integrity and credibility of the re-examination.
 - Prevent the rapid spread of unauthorized exam content.
 - Reduce opportunities for organized cheating networks.
- The decision follows concerns arising from the NEET-UG paper leak controversy, which led to demands for stricter examination security measures.

Legal Framework Behind the Blocking Order

- **Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000** empowers the Central Government to issue directions for blocking public access to any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer resource in the interest of sovereignty, integrity, defence, security, friendly relations with foreign states, or public order.
- **Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking of Access of Information by Public) Rules, 2009** prescribes the procedure for blocking, including examination of requests by a designated government committee and recording of reasons in writing.
- **Rule 9 of the IT Blocking Rules** interim blocking orders can be issued by the Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY),

subject to ex post facto ratification by the review committee within a stipulated period.

NEET-UG and Examination Security National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET-UG)

- Conducted by the **National Testing Agency (NTA)**.
- Serves as the single entrance examination for:
 - MBBS
 - BDS
 - AYUSH courses
 - Veterinary and other undergraduate medical programmes.
- One of the largest entrance examinations in India, with millions of candidates appearing annually.

Measures to Strengthen Exam Integrity

- Enhanced digital surveillance.
- Monitoring of social media and messaging platforms.
- Coordination between:
 - Ministry of Education
 - NTA
 - Law-enforcement agencies
 - State governments
- Stricter action against paper leak networks and impersonation rackets.

Concerns

- Temporary restriction affects legitimate users of the platform.
- Raises concerns regarding:
 - Digital access
 - Freedom of communication
 - Proportionality of platform-wide restrictions
- Highlights the growing challenge of securing large-scale examinations in the digital era.

Additional Info

National Testing Agency (NTA)

- Established in **2017**.
- Functions under the **Ministry of Education**.
- Responsible for conducting major national-level entrance examinations, including:
 - NEET
 - JEE Main
 - CUET
 - UGC-NET

Recent Measures Against Examination Malpractices

- Strengthening cyber-monitoring systems.

- Greater use of data analytics for detecting suspicious activities.
- Improved coordination among central and state enforcement agencies.
- Tighter security protocols for transportation and storage of question papers.

Constitutional & Rights Angle

- **Article 21** – The Right to Education has been read into the right to life and personal liberty; ensuring the fairness of examinations is essential to give effect to this right.
- **Article 19(1)(a) read with Article 19(2)** – The right to access information (including through messaging platforms) flows from freedom of speech and expression, but is subject to reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2) on grounds such as sovereignty, security, and public order.

QS World University Rankings 2027: India Climbs to 5th Position Globally

What's the News?

The **QS World University Rankings 2027** have been released by QS Quacquarelli Symonds, a global higher education analytics organization. India recorded its strongest-ever performance, with **54 universities featured in the rankings**, making it the **5th most represented higher education system globally**. Among Indian institutions, **IIT Delhi** emerged as the highest-ranked university, while the United States' MIT retained the top global position.

QS World University Rankings 2027 Top Global Universities

Rank	University
1	Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA
2	Stanford University, USA
3	Imperial College London, UK
4	Harvard University, USA
5	University of Oxford, UK

Ranking Methodology

QS evaluates universities using indicators such as:

- Academic Reputation
- Employer Reputation
- Citations per Faculty
- Faculty-Student Ratio
- International Faculty Ratio
- International Student Ratio
- International Research Network
- Employment Outcomes
- Sustainability

India's Performance

- India ranks **5th globally** in the number of institutions featured.
- **54 Indian universities** appeared in the rankings.
- India added **8 new institutions**, the highest increase among G20 nations.
- Over **48% of Indian institutions improved their rankings**, reflecting growing global competitiveness.

Top Indian Universities

India Rank	Institution	Global Rank
1	IIT Delhi	123
2	IIT Bombay	129
3	IIT Madras	180
4	IIT Kharagpur	215
5	IISc Bengaluru	219

About QS Rankings

QS (Quacquarelli Symonds)

- A UK-based higher education analytics and ranking organization.
- Publishes:
 - QS World University Rankings
 - QS Asia University Rankings
 - QS Subject Rankings
 - QS Sustainability Rankings

Additional Info

IIT Delhi

- Established: 1961
- Location: New Delhi
- Declared an Institution of Eminence in 2018.
- Highest-ranked Indian institution in QS World University Rankings 2027.

Indian Institute of Science (IISc)

- Founded: 1909
- Location: Bengaluru
- Recognized globally for scientific research and innovation.

UGC Foreign University Initiative: Global Campuses Set to Expand Higher Education in India

What's the News?

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has accelerated the implementation of its regulatory framework for foreign universities to establish campuses in India. Several globally ranked institutions have received approval or are in advanced stages of setting up campuses, while many more universities have expressed interest. The initiative aims to internationalize Indian higher education, improve access to world-class academic programmes, and support the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.



Foreign Universities in India

- UGC has approved the establishment of campuses by multiple foreign universities in India.
- Around **15 international universities** have shown interest in opening campuses under the new framework.
- Institutions from countries such as the **United Kingdom, Australia, the United States, and Italy** are among the prospective entrants.
- Degrees awarded by approved foreign university campuses in India will carry the same status as those awarded by the parent institution abroad.

Approved Universities

Some universities that have received approval or have announced plans to establish campuses include:

- **University of Southampton (United Kingdom)**
- **University of Liverpool (United Kingdom)**
- **Victoria University (Australia)**
- **Western Sydney University (Australia)**
- **Istituto Europeo di Design (Italy)**

These campuses are expected to offer programmes in areas such as business, engineering, technology, design, and management.

UGC Regulatory Framework

UGC (Setting Up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) Regulations, 2023

The regulations provide a structured mechanism for foreign institutions to operate in India.

Eligibility Criteria

A foreign university must:

- Be ranked among the top global institutions in internationally recognized rankings; or
- Possess outstanding expertise in a specialized academic field.

Academic Requirements

- Programmes offered in India must be equivalent to those offered at the parent campus.
- Admission processes, curriculum standards, and assessment mechanisms must match global benchmarks.
- Campuses can independently determine fee structures and admission criteria.

Regulatory Oversight

- UGC grants approval for an initial period, subject to periodic review.
- Institutions must maintain academic quality and transparency standards.

- Campuses cannot offer programmes that compromise India's national interests or educational standards.

Challenges and Concerns

Affordability

- Tuition fees may remain significantly higher than those of public Indian universities.
- Access could be limited for economically weaker sections unless scholarship mechanisms are expanded.

Quality Assurance

- Maintaining parity between Indian campuses and parent institutions will require strong regulatory oversight.

Faculty Availability

- Recruitment and retention of internationally qualified faculty may pose challenges.

Regulatory Coordination

- Effective coordination between UGC, state governments, professional regulators, and foreign institutions will be essential.

Additional Info

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

Key provisions related to foreign universities:

- Envisions entry of top global universities into India.
- Promotes internationalisation of higher education.
- Encourages multidisciplinary education and research.
- Targets increasing Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to **50% by 2035**.

University Grants Commission (UGC)

- Statutory body established under the **UGC Act, 1956**.
- Functions under the **Ministry of Education**.
- Responsible for coordination, determination, and maintenance of standards in higher education.

Study in India Programme

- Government initiative to attract international students to Indian institutions.
- Complements efforts to position India as a global education hub.

Constitutional Provisions

- **Entry 66, Union List (Seventh Schedule):** Coordination and determination of standards in higher education and research.
- **Entry 25, Concurrent List:** Education, including technical and medical education, subject to Union provisions.

India Ranked 13th in QS World Future Skills Index 2027

What's the News?

India has secured the **13th position globally** in the **QS World Future Skills Index 2027**, emerging as the **highest-ranked lower-middle-income economy** and the **only South Asian country in the top 15**. The report highlights India's strong preparedness for an AI-driven economy and future labour market but points to persistent gaps in digital, green and advanced technical skills that could affect long-term competitiveness.

QS World Future Skills Index 2027

- Published by **QS Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)**.
- Assesses how prepared countries are for the changing demands of the global workforce.
- Evaluates nations across four pillars:
 - **Skills Fit**
 - **Academic Readiness**
 - **Future of Work**
 - **Economic Transformation**
- Covers readiness for technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), automation and the green economy.

India's Performance

- **Overall Rank: 13th** globally.
- **Highest-ranked lower-middle-income economy.**
- **Only South Asian nation** in the global top 15.
- **Future of Work Rank: 5th** globally with a score of **96.0**, reflecting strong labour market readiness for emerging technologies.
- India has attracted around **US\$90 billion** in AI-related investments,

strengthening its position as an AI-ready economy.

Strengths

- Rapid economic growth supporting future workforce demand.
- Large and youthful talent pool.
- Expanding AI ecosystem and digital infrastructure.
- Strong startup ecosystem and innovation capacity.
- Increasing government focus on digital skills and emerging technologies.

Challenges Identified

- Mismatch between education outcomes and industry requirements.
- Shortage of skilled professionals in:
 - Artificial Intelligence
 - Advanced digital technologies
 - Green technologies
- Uneven quality of higher education institutions.
- Need for greater investment in research, innovation and faculty development.
- Regional disparities in access to quality skill development.

Additional Info

- **QS Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)**
 - London-based global higher education analytics organization.
 - Founded in **1990**.
 - Publishes:
 - QS World University Rankings
 - QS World Future Skills Index
 - QS Best Student Cities Rankings.

India Sets Record with Seven Schools Shortlisted for the World's Best School Prizes 2026

What's the News?

India has achieved a historic milestone with **seven schools** being shortlisted among the **Top 10 finalists** for the **World's Best School Prizes 2026**, the highest number of schools shortlisted by any country in a single edition since the awards were launched. The schools have been recognised across **four of the five award categories**, highlighting India's growing global recognition in innovation, community engagement, environmental sustainability, and student well-being. The winners will be selected by an expert Judging Academy, with finalists and winners to be announced later this year.

World's Best School Prizes

- Launched in **2022** by **T4 Education**, a UK-based global education platform.
- Created in the aftermath of the **COVID-19 pandemic** to recognise schools transforming education.
- Recognises schools making a measurable impact both inside and beyond classrooms.
- Schools are assessed by an independent international Judging Academy.

Five Award Categories

- Community Collaboration
- Environmental Action

- Innovation
- Overcoming Adversity
- Supporting Healthy Lives

Indian Schools Shortlisted

Category	School	Location
Innovation	PCMC Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj English Medium School	Pune, Maharashtra
Innovation	Army Goodwill School, Wuzur	Anantnag, Jammu & Kashmir
Community Collaboration	Healthy Planet TGA Early Years School	Noida, Uttar Pradesh
Community Collaboration	Inventure Academy	Bengaluru, Karnataka
Community Collaboration	Seth M.R. Jaipuria School (Vineet Khand)	Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
Environmental Action	EuroSchool Bannerghatta	Bengaluru, Karnataka
Supporting Healthy Lives	Seth Anandram Jaipuria School	Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

About T4 Education

- **Headquarters:** United Kingdom
- A global education platform connecting educators and school leaders.
- Organises:
 - World's Best School Prizes
 - World Schools Summit
 - Global education leadership initiatives
- Focuses on innovation, equity, digital learning, sustainability, and quality education.

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

- 5+3+3+4 curricular structure.
- Foundational literacy and numeracy.
- Multidisciplinary education.
- Competency-based learning.
- Greater use of technology in education.
- Flexibility in subject choices.
- Promotion of vocational education from school level.

DIKSHA Becomes India's "One Nation, One Digital Platform" for School Education

What's the News?

The Central Government has declared DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing) as India's "One Nation, One Digital Platform" for school education. Launched in 2017 under the Ministry of Education's PM e-Vidya initiative, DIKSHA is managed by NCERT with support from the Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET). Nearly all State and UT education boards now use the platform, which follows a federated, open-source model allowing states to customise content for local needs.

DIKSHA Platform

- National digital platform for school education.
- **DIKSHA Full Form:** Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing.
- **Launched:** 2017.

- **Developed by:** National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).
- **Technical partner:** Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET).
- **Administrative Ministry:** Ministry of Education.
- Built on the **Sunbird** open-source digital learning platform.
- Supports **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)** to **Class XII** education.

Features

- Curriculum-aligned digital resources.
- QR-coded **Energised Textbooks** linked to digital content.
- Interactive learning through:
 - Videos
 - 2D & 3D animations
 - Augmented Reality (AR)
 - Simulations
 - Virtual laboratories
- Indian Sign Language (ISL) videos for inclusive education.

- Teacher professional development courses.
- Online and offline learning support.
- State-specific customization while maintaining a common national platform.

Teacher Training Component

DIKSHA also functions as a Learning Management System for teacher professional development.

- **NISHTHA** (National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement) is delivered through DIKSHA, offering self-paced online training and certification.
- State-specific teacher training modules are also integrated into the platform.

Offline Access

To address connectivity gaps, DIKSHA supports downloadable content and allows schools to preload material onto smart classroom boards, ensuring learning continuity in low-connectivity areas.

PM eVIDYA

- National digital education initiative launched under the **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**.
- Aims to ensure uninterrupted learning through multiple digital modes.

Components

- DIKSHA – One Nation, One Digital Platform.
- One Class One Channel (Swayam Prabha DTH).
- e-Pathshala.
- Radio, podcasts and community radio.
- Special digital content for Children with Special Needs (CWSN).

Additional Info

- **NCERT**: National Council of Educational Research and Training – the apex body for school curriculum and pedagogy in India, headquartered in New Delhi.
- **CIET**: Central Institute of Educational Technology, a constituent unit of NCERT that supports DIKSHA's technical development.
- **Related digital education schemes**: SWAYAM (higher education MOOCs), SWAYAM PRABHA (educational DTH channels), and the National Digital Library of India complement DIKSHA in India's e-learning ecosystem.

Economy & Finance

ECLGS 5.0: ₹35,194 Crore Sanctioned for Firms Affected by West Asia Crisis

What's the News?

- Banks have sanctioned over **₹35,194 crore** under **Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) 5.0**.
- The scheme aims to provide additional credit support to **MSMEs, airlines, logistics firms, exporters, and other businesses** impacted by disruptions arising from the **West Asia conflict**.
- The initiative seeks to ensure liquidity availability, protect employment, and support economic activity in sectors facing supply-chain and cost pressures.

ECLGS 5.0

- **ECLGS 5.0** is a targeted credit guarantee scheme of the **Government of India**.
- It provides additional working capital and term loans to eligible businesses affected by external economic shocks.
- Loans sanctioned under the scheme are backed by a government guarantee, reducing the lending risk for banks and financial institutions.

Features

- Provides **100% guarantee coverage** through the **National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd. (NCGTC)**.
- Enables faster access to institutional credit without additional collateral requirements.
- Targets sectors adversely affected by disruptions in trade, logistics, fuel prices, and global supply chains.
- Supports business continuity and operational stability.

Why Was ECLGS 5.0 Introduced?

- The **West Asia crisis** led to:
 - Higher transportation and logistics costs.
 - Supply-chain disruptions.
 - Increased fuel and commodity price volatility.
 - Reduced business cash flows in vulnerable sectors.
- The scheme was introduced to:
 - Prevent liquidity stress from turning into solvency stress.

- Maintain employment levels.
- Ensure uninterrupted economic activity.
- Strengthen the resilience of MSMEs and service-sector enterprises.

Significance for MSMEs

- MSMEs contribute significantly to:
 - Employment generation.
 - Exports.
 - Manufacturing output.
 - Regional economic development.

Expected Benefits

- Improved access to formal credit.
- Reduced risk of business closures.
- Enhanced capacity to manage short-term financial stress.
- Preservation of jobs and productive capacity.

National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd. (NCGTC)

- A wholly owned company of the **Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance**.
- Acts as the trustee for various credit guarantee schemes of the Government.
- Facilitates credit flow to priority and vulnerable sectors by providing guarantee support to lenders.

Additional Info

Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS)

- Initially launched during the **COVID-19 pandemic** under the **Aatmanirbhar Bharat Package**.
- Designed to provide guaranteed emergency credit to businesses facing financial stress.
- Implemented through:
 - Scheduled Commercial Banks
 - Financial Institutions
 - Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)

Importance of Credit Guarantee Schemes

- Encourage lending to risk-prone sectors.
- Reduce collateral-related barriers.
- Improve financial inclusion of small enterprises.
- Support economic recovery during crises.

India to Introduce Producer Price Index (PPI), Gradually Replace WPI

What's the News?

- The Government of India is set to introduce the **Producer Price Index (PPI)** alongside a revised **Wholesale Price Index (WPI)** with a new base year of **2022–23**.
- The move marks a major reform in India's inflation measurement framework and aims to align it with international statistical standards.
- Over a transition period of about five years, **PPI** is expected to gradually replace **WPI** as the principal indicator of producer-level inflation.

Producer Price Index (PPI)

What is PPI?

- **PPI** measures the average change in prices received by producers for goods and services at different stages of production.
- It captures price movements before they reach consumers.
- Unlike WPI, it includes both **goods and services**, providing a more comprehensive picture of inflationary pressures in the economy.

Components of PPI

- **Output PPI** – Prices received by producers for their output.
- **Input PPI** – Prices paid by producers for raw materials and intermediate inputs.
- **Services PPI** – Measures price changes in service sectors.

Services Covered Initially

- Key service sectors proposed to be covered include:
 - Banking
 - Insurance
 - Railways
 - Telecommunications
 - Other major service activities
- Service-sector PPI will initially be released on a quarterly basis.

Why Replace the Wholesale Price Index?

Limitations of WPI

- Covers only **goods**, excluding services.
- Measures prices at the wholesale stage rather than across the production chain.
- Does not fully reflect the changing structure of India's economy, where services contribute significantly to GDP.

Advantages of PPI

- Provides broader coverage of economic activity.
- Tracks inflationary pressures at multiple production stages.
- Improves inflation forecasting and policy formulation.
- Offers better inputs for fiscal, monetary, and business decision-making.
- Aligns India's statistical framework with global best practices.

Revised Wholesale Price Index

Key Changes

- New **base year: 2022–23** (earlier: 2011–12).
- Updated commodity basket and revised weights to better reflect current economic realities.
- Existing WPI series will continue during the transition period before eventual phase-out.

Current Role of WPI

- Measures wholesale price inflation of goods.
- Widely used as a **GDP deflator** and for economic analysis.
- Compiled and released by the **Office of the Economic Adviser (OEA)** under **DPIIT**, Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

Significance for India

Better Inflation Measurement

- Captures inflation in both manufacturing and services sectors.
- Provides an early indication of future consumer price pressures.

Improved Policymaking

- Enables more accurate assessment of producer costs.
- Supports evidence-based monetary and fiscal decisions.

Statistical Modernisation

- Forms part of broader reforms in:
 - GDP estimation
 - Index of Industrial Production (IIP)
 - Inflation statistics
- Enhances data quality and international comparability.

Additional Info

Difference Between CPI, WPI and PPI

Feature	CPI	WPI	PPI
Measures	Consumer prices	Wholesale prices	Producer prices
Coverage	Goods & Services	Goods only	Goods & Services
Stage	Final consumer	Wholesale stage	Multiple production stages
Used for	Retail inflation	Producer inflation/GDP deflation	Comprehensive producer inflation
International Practice	Widely used	Limited use	Widely adopted globally

Important Organisations

- **DPIIT** – Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade.
- **Office of the Economic Adviser (OEA)** – Compiles WPI and forthcoming PPI series.
- **Ministry of Commerce & Industry.**
- **National Statistical Office (NSO)** – Supports statistical data collection and methodology.

Government Approves ₹10,000 Crore Aviation Fuel Price Stabilisation Fund

What's the News?

- The Union Cabinet has approved a **₹10,000 crore Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) Price Stabilisation Fund** to protect Indian airlines from sharp increases in jet fuel prices caused by global geopolitical disruptions.
- The support will be provided to **Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs)** as **interest-free advances** to stabilize ATF prices for scheduled Indian airlines.
- The measure aims to ensure continuity of domestic and international air services, prevent steep airfare hikes, and support the financial viability of airlines.

ATF Price Stabilisation Fund

- A one-time corpus of up to **₹10,000 crore** will be provided through the **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**.
- The fund will compensate OMCs when international ATF prices exceed a government-determined benchmark price.
- Available to all willing **Scheduled Indian Airlines** for:
 - Domestic operations
 - International operations
- The scheme will remain operational for up to **36 months**, subject to annual review.

Why Was the Fund Needed?

- Global fuel prices have risen sharply due to the **West Asia conflict**, significantly increasing ATF costs.
- ATF accounts for nearly **40% of airline operating costs**, and during extreme volatility can constitute an even larger share.
- Additional operational costs have emerged due to:
 - Longer flight routes caused by regional airspace disruptions.
 - Increased fuel consumption on international routes.
- Rising fuel costs threatened:
 - Airline profitability.
 - Air connectivity.
 - Affordable passenger fares.

Features of the Scheme

- **Interest-Free Advance**
 - Government support is provided as interest-free advances to OMCs.
- **Fixed Price Mechanism**
 - Provides greater predictability in fuel costs.
 - Reduces airlines' exposure to sudden global fuel price spikes.
- **Recovery Mechanism**
 - When international ATF prices moderate, the support amount will be recovered from OMCs.
 - Recovered funds will be returned to the **Consolidated Fund of India**.
- **Monitoring Framework**
 - A monitoring committee will oversee implementation, Download Our App



reconciliation, claim verification, and settlement.

- All claims will be subject to audit.

Additional Info

Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF)

- Specialized fuel used by aircraft powered by gas-turbine engines.
- One of the largest cost components for airlines globally.
- Prices are influenced by:
 - Crude oil prices.
 - International energy markets.
 - Geopolitical developments.

Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs)

- Major public-sector OMCs include:
 - Indian Oil Corporation
 - Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited
 - Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited
- Responsible for refining, distribution, and sale of petroleum products, including ATF.

Consolidated Fund of India

- Established under **Article 266(1) of the Constitution**.
- All revenues received by the Government of India, loans raised, and recoveries are credited to this fund.
- Expenditure from the fund requires parliamentary authorization.

Natural Gas Discovery in Andaman Basin Boosts India's Energy Security Prospects

What's the News?

- **Oil India Limited (OIL)** has reported another significant **natural gas discovery** in the **Andaman Basin**, reinforcing the region's potential as a major offshore hydrocarbon province.
- The discovery was made during exploratory drilling at a depth of around **355 metres below the seabed**.
- Union Petroleum Minister described the basin as an **"Ocean of Energy Opportunities"**, highlighting its strategic importance for India's energy future.
- The find strengthens expectations that the Andaman offshore region could emerge as a major domestic source of natural gas, reducing reliance on imported fuels.

Andaman Basin Gas Discovery

Overview

- The **Andaman Basin** is located in the eastern offshore region of India within the **Bay of Bengal**.

- It is considered one of India's least explored but highly prospective hydrocarbon basins.
- Recent discoveries indicate the presence of substantial gas-bearing geological formations.

Geological Features

- Part of the larger **Andaman-Nicobar offshore sedimentary basin**.
- Located near the tectonically active zone formed by the interaction of the **Indian Plate** and **Burma Microplate**.
- Contains thick sedimentary deposits favourable for hydrocarbon accumulation.

India's Hydrocarbon Exploration

Strategy

Policy Support

- Exploration activities are being promoted under the **Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP)**.
- The **Open Acreage Licensing Programme (OALP)** allows companies to select and bid for exploration blocks throughout the year.

Objectives

- Increase domestic oil and gas production.
- Attract private and foreign investment.
- Improve exploration of frontier basins.
- Enhance long-term energy self-reliance.

India's Natural Gas Sector

- Government aims to increase the share of natural gas in India's energy basket from around **6% to 15%**.
- Major domestic gas-producing regions:
 - **Krishna-Godavari Basin**
 - **Mumbai Offshore Basin**
 - **Assam-Arakan Basin**
 - **Cambay Basin**
 - **Andaman Basin** (emerging)

India Emerges as World's Third-Largest Domestic Aviation Market

What's the News?

India has become the **world's third-largest domestic aviation market**, surpassing Brazil and Indonesia, and trailing only the **United States** and **China**. This milestone reflects strong growth in domestic passenger traffic and airline capacity, driven by policy initiatives, infrastructure expansion, and rising demand.

India's Position in Global Aviation

- India ranks:



- **3rd globally in domestic aviation market size**
- **5th globally in overall aviation market** (domestic + international passenger traffic)
- India moved from the **5th position a decade ago** to the **3rd position** in domestic aviation.
- The domestic market surpassed countries such as **Brazil** and **Indonesia** in airline seat capacity.

Statistics

- **15.6 million domestic airline seats** recorded in a month during the assessment period.
- **174 million passengers** travelled from and within India by air in 2024.
- India contributes about **4.2% of global air passenger traffic**.

Drivers of Growth

UDAN Scheme

- Launched to make air travel affordable and accessible.
- Enhances connectivity to underserved and unserved airports.
- Promotes regional economic development and tourism.
- Often described as a major driver of aviation democratization in India.

Airport Infrastructure Expansion

- Significant increase in operational airports across the country.
- Government has outlined a long-term vision to expand airport infrastructure substantially by 2047.

Growing Middle Class and Disposable Income

- Rising incomes and urbanisation have increased demand for air travel.
- Air travel is increasingly being adopted beyond metropolitan cities, with strong growth from Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.

Additional Info

International Air Transport Association (IATA)

- Global trade association of airlines.
- Founded in **1945**.
- Headquarters:
 - Montreal (Executive Office)
 - Geneva (Administrative Office)
- Represents approximately **350 airlines worldwide**.
- Publishes major aviation datasets and reports such as:
 - **World Air Transport Statistics (WATS)**
 - Country aviation reports
 - Air passenger forecasts

UDAN Scheme

- Full Form: **Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik**
- Ministry: **Ministry of Civil Aviation**
- Objective:
 - Affordable air travel
 - Regional connectivity
 - Balanced regional development
- Implemented under the **National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) 2016**.

Government Releases Producer Price Index (PPI) Data

What's the News?

The Government of India has released experimental **Producer Price Index (PPI)** data for goods and services, marking a significant step toward replacing the existing **Wholesale Price Index (WPI)** as the primary measure of producer-level inflation. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) plans a gradual transition, with PPI expected to replace WPI over the next five years after methodological refinement and stakeholder consultations.

Producer Price Index (PPI)

What is PPI?

The **Producer Price Index (PPI)** measures the average change over time in the prices received by producers for goods and services before they reach consumers.

Characteristics

- Measures inflation from the producer's perspective.
- Covers both **goods and services**.
- Captures price changes at different stages of production.
- Provides a more comprehensive picture of inflationary pressures in the economy.

Coverage of New Experimental PPI

- Includes manufacturing, mining, electricity, and services sectors.
- Uses a broader database than WPI.
- Aligned more closely with international statistical standards.

Why Replace WPI?

Limitations of WPI

- Measures only wholesale prices of goods.
- Excludes the services sector, which contributes more than 50% of India's GDP.
- Does not fully capture modern economic activity.
- Limited usefulness in a service-driven economy.

Advantages of PPI

Feature	WPI	PPI



Coverage	Goods only	Goods and Services
Price Level	Wholesale prices	Producer prices
Services Included	No	Yes
International Practice	Limited use	Widely used globally
Inflation Tracking	Partial	More comprehensive

International Practice

Countries Using PPI

Many advanced and emerging economies publish PPI data, including:

- United States
- United Kingdom
- Canada
- Australia
- Japan
- European Union member states

Global Statistical Standards

The development of India's PPI aligns with recommendations of:

- International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- World Bank
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- United Nations Statistical Commission

Inflation Indices in India

Consumer Price Index (CPI)

- Measures retail inflation faced by consumers.
- Released by MoSPI.
- Used by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for inflation targeting.
- RBI's inflation target: $4\% \pm 2\%$.

Wholesale Price Index (WPI)

- Measures changes in wholesale prices of goods.
- Released by the Office of Economic Adviser (OEA) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- Base Year: 2011-12.

Producer Price Index (PPI)

- Measures prices received by producers.
- Covers both goods and services.
- Intended to eventually replace WPI.

Additional Info

Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)

- Nodal ministry for official statistics in India.
- Responsible for:
 - National accounts statistics.
 - Consumer Price Index (CPI).
 - Industrial statistics.
 - Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS).

Office of Economic Adviser (OEA)

- Functions under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
- Responsible for compilation and publication of WPI.

Difference Between CPI and PPI

Aspect	CPI	PPI
Measures	Prices paid by consumers	Prices received by producers
Perspective	Demand side	Supply side
Includes Taxes	Yes	Generally excludes indirect taxes
Policy Use	Inflation targeting	Inflation monitoring and forecasting

BSE Launches India's First Saatvik 100 Index

What's the News?

BSE Index Services Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of the BSE Ltd., has launched the **BSE Saatvik 100 Index**, India's first equity index based on **Saatvik principles and value-based investing**. The index aims to provide investors with a benchmark that combines financial performance with ethical, cultural, and philosophy-driven investment considerations.

BSE Saatvik 100 Index

The BSE Saatvik 100 Index is derived from the **BSE 500 Index** and consists of **100 companies** that satisfy predefined Saatvik screening criteria. The index excludes businesses associated with activities considered inconsistent with Saatvik values, such as intoxicants, gambling, cruelty-related activities, and certain unethical business practices.

Features

- India's first Saatvik-themed equity index.
- Universe: Companies selected from the BSE 500 Index.
- Number of constituents: 100.
- Base value: 1,000.
- Base date (first value date): 20 June 2005.
- Reconstituted semi-annually in June and December.
- Can serve as a benchmark for passive and thematic investment products.

Sector Composition

- Financial Services holds the highest weightage at **37.55%**.



- Includes leading companies meeting the prescribed screening methodology.

Saatvik Investing

What is Saatvik Investing?

Saatvik investing draws inspiration from the concept of "**Sattva**" in Indian philosophy, which emphasizes:

- Purity.
- Ethical conduct.
- Responsibility.
- Long-term sustainability.
- Avoidance of harmful or socially undesirable activities.

Investment Philosophy

The index reflects a growing trend where investors evaluate companies not only on:

- Profitability,
 - Growth prospects,
 - Financial performance,
- but also on:

- Ethical business practices,
- Cultural values,
- Social responsibility,
- Long-term impact.

Additional Info

Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE)

- Established in **1875**.
- Asia's oldest stock exchange.
- Headquarters: Mumbai.
- Benchmark index: **BSE Sensex**.
- Regulated by the Securities and Exchange Board of India.

BSE Index Services Ltd.

- Wholly-owned subsidiary of BSE Ltd.
- Responsible for designing, calculating, and maintaining BSE indices.
- Formerly known as Asia Index Pvt. Ltd.

Saatvik vs ESG Investing

Aspect	Saatvik Investing	ESG Investing
Basis	Ethical and philosophical principles	Environmental, Social and Governance factors
Focus	Value-based screening	Sustainability and corporate governance
Origin	Indian philosophical traditions	Global responsible investing framework
Objective	Align investments with ethical values	Assess long-term sustainability risks

Moody's Flags Risks in India's Water Management Framework

What's the News?

Moody's Ratings has warned that India's **fragmented and inflexible water management framework** could increase fiscal and credit risks over time. The agency highlighted that water governance is spread across states, resulting in uneven policies, subsidised pricing, slow water reallocation, and delayed investments. According to Moody's, growing water stress could lead to higher public expenditure, disruptions in agriculture and industry, and greater pressure on government finances.

Why is Moody's Concerned?

Fragmented Governance

- Water governance in India is largely controlled by individual states.
- Policies, pricing mechanisms, and allocation frameworks vary significantly across regions.
- Lack of a coordinated national framework can delay responses during droughts and water shortages.

Structural Weaknesses Identified

Moody's noted several challenges:

- Highly subsidised water pricing.
- Limited flexibility in reallocating water among sectors.
- Slow implementation of water infrastructure projects.
- Weak investment pathways for long-term water security.
- Growing competition for water among agriculture, industry, and urban areas.

Fiscal and Credit Risks

Impact on Government Finances

Water shortages may force governments to:

- Increase spending on drought relief and water supply schemes.
- Expand irrigation and storage infrastructure.
- Support affected agricultural communities.
- Invest in climate-resilient water systems.

Such expenditures can create sustained fiscal pressure on both state and central governments.

Impact on Credit Profile

Moody's warned that prolonged water stress can result in:

- Higher industrial production costs.
- Disruptions in public services.
- Reduced agricultural output.
- Inflationary pressures, especially in food prices.



- Slower economic growth and increased credit risks.

Water Stress and Climate Change Growing Vulnerability

India faces increasing water stress due to:

- Rising population and urbanisation.
- Expanding industrial demand.
- Dependence on monsoon rainfall.
- Climate change-induced droughts, floods, and heatwaves.

Moody's has previously observed that declining per-capita water availability could adversely affect India's economic growth and sovereign credit strength.

Economic Sectors at Risk

Water-intensive sectors particularly exposed include:

- Agriculture
- Thermal power generation
- Steel and manufacturing industries
- Urban water supply systems

Disruptions in these sectors can affect productivity, employment, and government revenues.

India's Water Governance Framework Constitutional Provisions

- **Entry 17, State List (Seventh Schedule):** Water supply, irrigation, canals, drainage, embankments, water storage and water power largely fall under state jurisdiction.
- **Entry 56, Union List:** Parliament can regulate and develop inter-state rivers and river valleys in the public interest.

This division often creates coordination challenges between states and the Centre.

Key Institutions

- **Ministry of Jal Shakti**
- **Central Water Commission (CWC)**
- **Central Ground Water Board (CGWB)**
- **National Water Development Agency (NWDA)**

Additional Info

National Water Policy, 2012

Objectives:

- Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).
- Efficient water use and conservation.
- Participatory irrigation management.
- Climate-resilient water planning.
- Protection of rivers, wetlands, and groundwater.

Jal Jeevan Mission (2019)

- Objective: Functional household tap water connection to every rural household.
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Jal Shakti.

Atal Bhujal Yojana

- Community-led groundwater management scheme.
- Focuses on water-stressed areas across selected states.

PM Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)

- Motto: "Har Khet Ko Pani"
- Aims to improve irrigation efficiency and water-use efficiency.

National Water Mission

- One of the eight missions under the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**.
- Target: Improve water-use efficiency and ensure integrated water resource management.

India Becomes the World's Largest Ship Recycling Nation

What's the News?

India has emerged as the **world's largest ship recycling nation**, achieving a key target under **Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030** ahead of schedule. According to the latest data from the **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)**, India's ship recycling volume rose significantly in 2025, enabling it to surpass other major ship-recycling countries and secure the top global position.

India's Ship Recycling Milestone Achievements

- India recycled **2.99 million Gross Tons (GT)** of ships in 2025.
- Ship recycling volume increased by nearly **60%** from **1.86 million GT** in **2024**.
- India's share of global ship recycling increased from **30.1% to 35.4%** within a year.
- The achievement fulfills a major **Maritime India Vision 2030** target several years ahead of schedule.

Why It Matters

- Strengthens India's position in the global maritime economy.
- Generates employment in recycling, steel processing, logistics, and allied sectors.
- Promotes circular economy practices through recovery and reuse of steel and equipment.
- Enhances India's role in sustainable maritime infrastructure.

Factors Behind the Success

Policy Measures

The government attributes the achievement to several reforms and initiatives:



- **Ship-breaking Credit Note Scheme** to incentivize domestic shipbuilding.
- Expansion and modernization of ship recycling facilities.
- Active stakeholder engagement with industry participants.
- Compliance with international environmental and safety standards.
- Inclusion of Indian recycling yards under the **European Union Ship Recycling Regulation (EUSRR)** framework.

Infrastructure Development

- Continuous modernization of recycling yards.
- Improved environmental safeguards and worker safety measures.
- Greater global acceptance of Indian recycling facilities.

Alang-Sosiya Ship Recycling Hub

India's Ship Recycling Backbone

The **Alang-Sosiya Ship Recycling Yard** in Gujarat remains the world's largest ship recycling cluster and accounts for nearly all of India's ship recycling activity. It possesses an annual recycling capacity of around **6 million gross tonnes**.

Strategic Advantages

- Large tidal range facilitating beaching of vessels.
- Extensive downstream steel and recycling ecosystem.
- Established waste-management and dismantling infrastructure.
- Availability of skilled workforce.

Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030

What is MIV 2030?

Maritime India Vision 2030 is the Government of India's long-term roadmap for transforming the maritime sector.

Targets

- Become a global leader in ship recycling.
- Enter the top ranks in global shipbuilding.
- Enhance port efficiency and logistics connectivity.
- Increase India's share in global maritime trade.
- Promote sustainable and green maritime practices.

Additional Info

Hong Kong International Convention for Ship Recycling

- Adopted by the **International Maritime Organization (IMO)** in 2009.
- Ensures safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships.
- Entered into force globally in 2025.

- India enacted the **Recycling of Ships Act, 2019** and was among the early major ship-recycling nations to align with the Convention.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

- Established: 1964
- Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland
- Mandate:
 - Promote trade and development.
 - Support developing countries in integrating into the global economy.
 - Publish global maritime and shipping statistics.

Circular Economy Benefits of Ship Recycling

- Recovery of steel and non-ferrous metals.
- Reuse of machinery, equipment, and fittings.
- Reduction in demand for virgin raw materials.
- Lower carbon footprint compared to primary steel production.

NITI Aayog Releases Eighth Edition of Trade Watch Quarterly

What's the News?

NITI Aayog has released the **eighth edition of the Trade Watch Quarterly** for Q4 FY 2025-26 (January-March 2026). The report reviews India's merchandise and services trade performance, analyses global trade trends, and includes a thematic study on **India's pharmaceutical industry**, highlighting its growing role in global healthcare and export competitiveness.

India's Trade Performance

- India's **total merchandise and services trade** reached **US\$ 1.84 trillion** in FY 2025-26, registering **5.4% year-on-year growth**.
- **Exports** grew by **4.2%**, while **imports** increased by **6.5%**.
- Merchandise exports moderated during Q4, whereas services exports remained the key driver of overall trade growth.
- India retained its position as the **world's 8th-largest services exporter** in 2025.
- The report notes that geopolitical disruptions, including the **West Asia crisis**, have acted as temporary supply shocks, reinforcing the need for trade diversification.

Pharmaceutical Sector Highlights

- The special thematic chapter focuses on **India's pharmaceutical industry**.

- India exported **pharmaceuticals and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs)** worth **US\$ 35.8 billion** during FY 2025-26.
- India remains:
 - The **largest global supplier of generic medicines**.
 - A leading vaccine producer.
 - An important exporter of APIs and formulations.
- The report highlights opportunities arising from:
 - Patent expiries in advanced economies.
 - Rising global healthcare demand.
 - Expansion of biosimilars and specialty medicines.
- It also identifies challenges such as:
 - Dependence on imported APIs.
 - Regulatory compliance.
 - Need for higher investment in R&D and innovation.

Recommendations

- Strengthen domestic API manufacturing.
- Increase investment in pharmaceutical R&D and innovation.
- Diversify export destinations to reduce concentration risks.
- Enhance quality standards and regulatory compliance.
- Improve resilience of global supply chains through domestic capacity building.

Additional Info

- Trade Watch Quarterly**
 - Published by **NITI Aayog**.
 - Provides quarterly analysis of:
 - Merchandise trade.
 - Services trade.
 - Global trade developments.
 - Sector-specific export opportunities.
 - Helps policymakers identify emerging trade trends and formulate export strategies.
- Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API)**
 - The biologically active component responsible for the therapeutic effect of a medicine.
 - India is a major global manufacturer, though it continues to import a significant share of key bulk drug ingredients.
- Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Pharmaceuticals**
 - Launched to promote domestic manufacturing.
 - Focuses on:
 - High-value pharmaceutical products.

- Bulk drugs (APIs).
- Medical devices.
- Objective:
 - Reduce import dependence.
 - Improve global competitiveness.
 - Strengthen India's pharmaceutical supply chain.

NITI Aayog

- Established:** 1 January 2015.
- Replaced the **Planning Commission**.
- Apex public policy think tank of the Government of India.
- Promotes **Cooperative and Competitive Federalism**.

Hurun India 500 Report 2026: Top 10 Companies Account for 27% of Total Valuation

What's the News?

The **Hurun India 500 Report 2026**, released by **Hurun India** in association with **Axis Bank Burgundy Private**, ranks India's **500 most valuable non-state-owned companies** based on their market capitalisation or valuation. The report highlights that the **top 10 companies account for 27% of the total valuation** of the Hurun India 500 list, reflecting the high concentration of corporate value in India's largest firms. Despite an overall decline of **₹11 lakh crore** in the valuation of the top 10 companies compared to the previous year, **Reliance Industries** retained the top position.

Highlights of the Report

- Total valuation of **Hurun India 500** companies: **US\$3.4 trillion** (about **₹286 lakh crore**).
- Combined valuation of the **Top 10 companies: ₹86 lakh crore**.
- Share of Top 10 in total valuation: **27%**.
- Valuation erosion of Top 10 firms: Around **₹11 lakh crore** compared to the previous edition.
- Average number of employees per company: **95,400**, up **4%** year-on-year.

Top 10 Most Valuable Companies

Rank	Company
1	Reliance Industries
2	HDFC Bank
3	Bharti Airtel
4	Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)
5	ICICI Bank
6	Infosys
7	State Bank of India (SBI)
8	Larsen & Toubro (L&T)



9	Bajaj Finance
10	Hindustan Unilever (HUL)

Key observations

- **Reliance Industries** remained India's most valuable company with a valuation of about **₹19.36 lakh crore**.
- **Bharti Airtel** emerged as the **largest wealth creator over the last five years**, adding nearly **₹7.64 lakh crore** in value.

Major Trends

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, **Defence Manufacturing**, and the **Indian Premier League (IPL)** emerged as important new drivers of corporate value.
- Five IPL franchises entered the Hurun India 500 for the first time.
- Growth was driven by sectors such as:
 - Financial Services
 - Telecommunications
 - Healthcare
 - Manufacturing
 - Digital Services
- Traditional IT companies witnessed relatively slower value creation than telecom and financial firms.

Unlisted Companies

The report also ranks India's most valuable unlisted companies.

Top 3 Unlisted Companies

1. National Stock Exchange (NSE)
2. Serum Institute of India
3. Adani Properties

The **NSE** retained its position as India's most valuable unlisted company with an estimated valuation of **₹4.86 lakh crore**.

About Hurun India 500

- Annual ranking of India's **500 most valuable non-state-owned companies**.
- Covers:
 - Listed companies (based on market capitalisation).
 - Unlisted companies (based on latest funding rounds or comparable valuation methods).
- Compiled by **Hurun India Research**.
- Serves as an indicator of corporate value creation and the evolving structure of the Indian economy.

Additional Info**Hurun Report**

- Founded: **1999**
- Founder: **Rupert Hoogewerf (Hu Run)**
- Headquarters: United Kingdom
- Focus areas:
 - Wealth rankings.
 - Business and entrepreneurship research.
 - Corporate valuation studies.

- Start-up and unicorn rankings.

Market Capitalisation

- The total market value of a listed company's outstanding shares.
- **Formula:**
 - **Market Capitalisation = Share Price × Number of Outstanding Shares**

Science & Technology

India Joins Anthropic's Advanced AI Programme

What's the News?

- India has been included among more than 15 countries selected to access **Anthropic's Claude Mythos Preview**, an advanced AI model focused on cybersecurity and vulnerability detection.
- The access is being provided under **Project Glasswing**, Anthropic's international initiative to strengthen cyber defence capabilities among trusted partner nations.
- Indian organisations will gain access to advanced AI tools designed for software security analysis, vulnerability discovery, and cyber threat mitigation.

What is Claude Mythos?

Overview

- Claude Mythos** is a specialized AI model developed by **Anthropic**.
- It is designed primarily for:
 - Cybersecurity research.
 - Software code analysis.
 - Vulnerability identification.
 - Cyber defence operations.
- The model can assist in detecting security flaws and recommending fixes before they can be exploited by malicious actors.

Why is Access Restricted?

- Mythos is not publicly available.
- Access is limited due to concerns that highly capable cybersecurity AI tools could potentially be misused for offensive cyber operations.
- Anthropic has adopted a controlled deployment approach by sharing the model only with vetted institutions and critical infrastructure partners.

Project Glasswing

About the Initiative

- Project Glasswing** is Anthropic's global cybersecurity programme.
- It aims to:
 - Improve cyber resilience.
 - Detect software vulnerabilities faster.
 - Strengthen critical infrastructure security.
 - Promote responsible deployment of advanced AI systems.
- The initiative is being expanded to around **150 organisations** across more than **15 countries**.

Participating Countries

- India.
- Japan.
- South Korea.
- Australia.
- Canada.
- New Zealand.
- France.
- Germany.
- Italy.
- Netherlands.
- Spain.
- Belgium.
- Sweden.
- Switzerland, among others.

Significance for India

Strengthening Cybersecurity

- Enhances India's ability to:
 - Identify cyber vulnerabilities.
 - Protect digital infrastructure.
 - Improve cyber incident response.
 - Support secure digital governance.

Strategic Technology Access

- Demonstrates growing international confidence in India's:
 - Digital ecosystem.
 - AI capabilities.
 - Cybersecurity expertise.
- Provides exposure to frontier AI technologies that can support indigenous innovation.

Support for Digital India

- Complements India's efforts to build:
 - Secure digital public infrastructure.
 - Trusted AI ecosystems.
 - Cyber-resilient governance systems.

Additional Info

Anthropic

- US-based Artificial Intelligence company.
- Developer of the **Claude** family of AI models.
- Focuses on:
 - AI safety.
 - Responsible AI development.
 - Alignment research.

IndiaAI Mission

- Flagship initiative of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**.
- Objectives:
 - Build AI computing infrastructure.
 - Develop indigenous AI models.



- Promote AI innovation and skilling.
- Strengthen AI research and startups.

Cybersecurity and Critical Infrastructure

- Critical sectors include:
 - Power.
 - Banking and Financial Services.
 - Telecommunications.
 - Healthcare.
 - Transport.
 - Government Digital Services.
- Advanced AI-assisted vulnerability detection can improve resilience against cyberattacks and ransomware threats.

ISRO Developing Lunar Lander for 200-Day Moon Missions

What's the News?

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is collaborating with the **Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)** to develop technologies that could enable future lunar landers to survive and operate on the Moon for up to **200 Earth days**. The project focuses on overcoming the extreme cold of the lunar night through advanced artificial heating systems, significantly extending mission life beyond the approximately **14-day operational period** achieved by the Chandrayaan-3 Vikram lander.

200-Day Lunar Lander Mission

Objective

- Develop a lunar lander capable of functioning through multiple lunar day-night cycles.
- Increase operational life from about **14 Earth days** to **100-200 Earth days**.
- Enable long-duration scientific experiments and sustained lunar surface operations.

Why is it Needed?

The Moon experiences extreme environmental conditions:

Parameter	Details
Lunar Day	~14 Earth days
Lunar Night	~14 Earth days
Night Temperature	Can fall below -180°C
Major Challenge	Survival of electronics, batteries and instruments

Current solar-powered landers generally cease operations during the prolonged and extremely cold lunar night.

Artificial Heating Technology

ISRO-DAE Collaboration

- ISRO and DAE are jointly developing **artificial heating systems**.
- The system aims to maintain survivable temperatures for:
 - Batteries
 - Electronic circuits
 - Scientific payloads
 - Communication systems

Chandrayaan Missions and Future Lunar Plans

Chandrayaan-3

- Successfully achieved a soft landing near the Moon's south polar region.
- Vikram lander and Pragyan rover operated for approximately one lunar day (~14 Earth days).
- Demonstrated India's capability for precision lunar landing.

Upcoming Missions

Chandrayaan-4

- Planned lunar sample return mission.
- Aims to collect lunar material and bring it back to Earth for scientific analysis.

Chandrayaan-5 (LUPEX)

- Planned joint mission involving India and Japan.
- Expected to carry a larger rover and enhanced scientific payloads.
- Designed for longer surface operations compared to previous missions.

Additional Info

Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)

- Established in **1954**.
- Functions directly under the Prime Minister.
- Responsible for:
 - Nuclear energy development.
 - Atomic research.
 - Strategic technologies.
- Major institutions:
 - Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)
 - Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR)
 - Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL)

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)

- Established: **1969**
- Parent Ministry: Department of Space
- Headquarters: Bengaluru
- Chairman: **V. Narayanan**
- Key Lunar Achievements:



- Chandrayaan-1: Discovery of water molecules on the Moon.
- Chandrayaan-2: Orbiter remains operational.
- Chandrayaan-3: Successful soft landing near the lunar south pole.

Lunar Night Challenge

- One of the most difficult aspects of lunar exploration.
- Extreme cold can:
 - Freeze batteries.
 - Damage electronics.
 - Disable communication systems.
- Only a few missions globally have survived multiple lunar nights through specialized thermal management systems.

Indian Railways Expands Kavach

4.0 Safety System

What's the News?

Indian Railways has approved multiple projects to expand **Kavach 4.0**, India's indigenous **Automatic Train Protection (ATP)** system. The latest approvals include the installation of Kavach on the Ahmedabad Division of Western Railway and other high-density railway corridors. The initiative aims to enhance rail safety, reduce accidents caused by human error, and strengthen operational efficiency across the railway network.

Kavach 4.0 Expansion

Recent Approvals

- Indian Railways has sanctioned the installation of **Kavach Version 4.0** on **598 route kilometres** covering **48 block sections** in the Ahmedabad Division of Western Railway.
- The Ahmedabad project has been approved at a cost of **₹140 crore**.
- Additional projects have been approved for route deployment, locomotive installation and communication infrastructure upgrades under the railway safety programme.

Wider Rollout

- Kavach 4.0 is being deployed on major high-density corridors across the country.
- Earlier, Kavach 4.0 had been commissioned on sections of:
 - Delhi-Mumbai corridor
 - Delhi-Howrah corridor
 - Vadodara-Ahmedabad route
- Indian Railways is accelerating nationwide implementation as part of its safety modernization programme.

What is Kavach?

Overview

- Kavach is an **indigenously developed Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system**.
- Developed under the guidance of the **Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO)**.
- Designed to prevent train collisions and enhance operational safety.
- Recognized as one of the world's most cost-effective ATP systems.

Functions

- Prevents **Signal Passing at Danger (SPAD)**.
- Controls overspeeding.
- Automatically applies brakes during critical situations.
- Prevents head-on and rear-end collisions.
- Assists train operations during poor visibility conditions.
- Warns loco pilots about unsafe movements and operational risks.

Features of Kavach 4.0

Advanced Capabilities

- Real-time train monitoring and communication.
- Automatic braking when a collision risk is detected.
- Enhanced interoperability across railway zones.
- LTE-based communication backbone for faster data exchange.
- Compliance with **Safety Integrity Level (SIL)-4**, the highest international railway safety standard.

Components

- RFID tags installed along tracks.
- On-board equipment in locomotives.
- Station-based signalling systems.
- Radio communication towers and optical fibre network.

Additional Info

Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO)

- Established in **1957**.
 - Headquarters: **Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh**.
 - Functions as the research and development wing of Indian Railways.
 - Responsible for developing and standardizing railway technologies.
- #### Signal Passing at Danger (SPAD)
- Occurs when a train passes a stop signal without authorization.
 - Considered one of the major causes of railway accidents globally.
 - Kavach automatically intervenes to prevent such incidents.



Railway Safety Push in 2026

- Kavach 4.0 commissioned on over **1,300 route kilometres** across Indian Railways.
- Expansion underway on major freight and passenger corridors.
- Thousands of railway personnel have been trained for Kavach operations and maintenance.

Bengaluru Emerges as Asia's Second-Largest AI-Native Startup Hub

What's the News?

Bengaluru has been ranked as **Asia's second-largest AI-native startup cluster** and **15th globally among startup ecosystems** in the **Global Startup Ecosystem Report (GSER) 2026**. The ranking highlights the city's growing leadership in Artificial Intelligence (AI), deep-tech innovation, venture capital attraction, and startup creation, reinforcing India's position as a major global innovation hub.

GSER 2026 Rankings

Bengaluru's Position

- Ranked **2nd in Asia** among AI-native startup ecosystems.
- Ranked **15th globally** among startup ecosystems.
- Retained its position as India's leading startup ecosystem.
- Recognized for strengths in:
 - Artificial Intelligence (AI)
 - Deep-tech innovation
 - Enterprise software
 - Venture capital ecosystem
 - Research and talent availability

Global Startup Ecosystem Report (GSER)

- Published annually by **Startup Genome** in collaboration with the **Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN)**.
- Evaluates startup ecosystems worldwide using indicators such as:
 - Performance
 - Funding
 - Market reach
 - Talent
 - Knowledge creation
 - Innovation ecosystem

AI-Native Startup Ecosystem

What are AI-Native Startups?

AI-native startups are companies where Artificial Intelligence is not merely a feature but forms the core of:

- Product design
- Business model
- Operations

Decision-making processes
Examples include firms working in:

- Generative AI
- Machine Learning
- Robotics
- Computer Vision
- Natural Language Processing (NLP)
- Autonomous Systems

Why Bengaluru Excels

- Strong IT and software services base.
- Presence of major global technology companies.
- Availability of skilled engineers and researchers.
- Growing venture capital investments.
- Strong startup incubator and accelerator ecosystem.
- Collaboration among academia, industry, and government.

India's Startup Ecosystem

- India remains among the world's largest startup ecosystems.
- Home to more than **1.5 lakh DPIIT-recognized startups**.
- Emerged as the **third-largest startup ecosystem globally** by number of startups.
- Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Delhi-NCR, Pune, Chennai, and Mumbai serve as major innovation hubs.

Major Growth Sectors

- Artificial Intelligence
- FinTech
- HealthTech
- EdTech
- Space Technology
- Defence Technology
- Clean Energy
- SaaS (Software as a Service)

Government Initiatives Supporting Startups

Startup India

- Launched in 2016.
- Provides tax benefits, funding support, and regulatory simplification.

Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS)

- Managed by the **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)**.
- Supports venture capital investments in startups.

Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)

- Promotes innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Establishes Atal Incubation Centres and Atal Tinkering Labs.

National Programme on AI

- Encourages AI research, innovation, and adoption across sectors.

IndiaAI Mission



- Supports AI infrastructure, datasets, computing capacity, and AI startups.
- Aims to strengthen India's AI ecosystem and talent pipeline.

Amaravati Quantum Valley Achieves 4 Kelvin Cooling Milestone

What's the News?

The **Amaravati Quantum Valley (AQV)** has successfully achieved **4 Kelvin (-269.15°C)** cooling at its **Quantum Reference Facility** in Medha Towers, Amaravati. This marks a major breakthrough in India's indigenous quantum technology ecosystem, as ultra-low temperature environments are essential for operating advanced quantum computing hardware. The achievement strengthens India's efforts to develop domestic quantum computing infrastructure and reduce dependence on imported technologies.

4 Kelvin Milestone

The Quantum Reference Facility achieved stable cooling to **4 Kelvin (K)** using indigenous cryogenic technology. Such temperatures are necessary to minimize thermal noise and maintain the delicate quantum states required for quantum computation.

Why 4 Kelvin Matters

- Equivalent to approximately **-269.15°C**.
- Only about **4 degrees above Absolute Zero (0 K)**.
- Enables operation of quantum processors and superconducting devices.
- Reduces environmental disturbances affecting qubits.
- Serves as a critical foundation for advanced quantum hardware research.

Amaravati Quantum Valley (AQV)

Overview

Amaravati Quantum Valley is envisioned as a national hub for:

- Quantum Computing.
- Quantum Communication.
- Quantum Sensing.
- Quantum Hardware Development.

Objectives

- Build indigenous quantum computing capabilities.
- Promote research-industry-academia collaboration.
- Develop quantum-ready infrastructure.
- Foster innovation and startup ecosystems in deep technologies.

Quantum Reference Facility

The facility serves as a testing and validation platform for:

- Quantum processors.

- Cryogenic systems.
- Superconducting devices.
- Quantum communication components.

Quantum Computing Basics

What is Quantum Computing?

Quantum computing uses **qubits** instead of classical bits.

Unlike classical bits that can be either 0 or 1, qubits can exist in multiple states simultaneously due to quantum mechanical properties.

Key Principles

Superposition

- A qubit can exist in multiple states at the same time.

Entanglement

- Qubits can become interconnected, allowing coordinated behavior.

Quantum Interference

- Enables amplification of correct computational outcomes.

Cryogenic Technology

What is Cryogenics?

Cryogenics deals with the production and maintenance of extremely low temperatures.

Importance in Quantum Computing

Most superconducting quantum processors require temperatures near absolute zero because:

- Electrical resistance becomes negligible.
- Quantum coherence can be maintained longer.
- Thermal noise is significantly reduced.

Absolute Zero

- Temperature: **0 Kelvin (-273.15°C)**.
- Lowest theoretically possible temperature.
- Represents minimum thermal energy.

National Quantum Mission (NQM)

The **National Quantum Mission (NQM)** was approved by the Government of India to accelerate quantum technology development.

Objectives

- Develop intermediate-scale quantum computers.
- Build secure quantum communication networks.
- Advance quantum sensing and metrology.
- Promote indigenous quantum technologies.

Duration & Outlay

- Period: **2023-2031**
- Outlay: **₹6,003.65 crore**

Target Areas

- Quantum Computing.
- Quantum Communication.



- Quantum Sensing.
- Quantum Materials and Devices.

Additional Info

Kelvin Scale

- SI unit of thermodynamic temperature.
- Named after physicist William Thomson, Lord Kelvin.
- Does not use degree (°) symbol.
- Begins at Absolute Zero.

15-Million-Year-Old Shark Fossils Discovered in Odisha

What's the News?

Researchers have discovered **15-million-year-old marine fossils**, including **shark teeth**, fish bones, mollusc shells, and other marine remains, in the **Baripada region of Mayurbhanj district, Odisha**. The discovery suggests that present-day Baripada, now located inland, was once covered by a shallow sea during the **Miocene Epoch**. The findings provide important evidence regarding Odisha's prehistoric marine environment and geological evolution.

Fossil Discovery in Baripada

The fossils were discovered during a field survey conducted by researchers and students in Mayurbhanj district. Local residents had long referred to the fossil-bearing remains as "**Asura Hadda**" (**Demon Bones**). Scientific examination later identified them as marine fossils dating back approximately **15 million years**.

Fossils Identified

The assemblage includes:

- Shark teeth.
- Fish vertebrae and bones.
- Mollusc shells.
- Microscopic marine organisms.
- Other marine faunal remains.

Finding

Researchers noted that sharks constitute a significant proportion of the recovered fish fossils, indicating the existence of a rich marine ecosystem in the region during the Miocene period.

Evidence of an Ancient Sea

The presence of shark teeth and other marine organisms demonstrates that:

- Baripada and surrounding regions were once submerged under a shallow sea.
- The coastline was located much farther inland than today.
- Significant geological and climatic changes altered the landscape over millions of years.

Miocene Epoch

Overview

The fossils are believed to belong to the **Miocene Epoch**, a geological period within the Neogene Period.

Time Span

- Approximately **23 million to 5.3 million years ago**.

Characteristics

- Expansion of grasslands.
- Evolution of many modern mammals.
- Significant climatic transitions.
- Diversification of marine life, including sharks, whales, and marine mammals.

Baripada Beds

Geological Importance

The fossil-bearing deposits belong to the **Baripada Beds**, which have long been recognized for marine fossil occurrences.

Earlier Fossil Records

Previous studies from the Baripada Beds have reported:

- Sharks.
- Rays (Batoids).
- Teleost fishes.
- Turtles.
- Crocodilians.
- Crabs.
- Mammalian remains.

Additional Info

Fossils

What are Fossils?

- Preserved remains, impressions, or traces of ancient organisms.
- Provide evidence about past life and environments.

Types

- Body fossils (bones, teeth, shells).
- Trace fossils (footprints, burrows).
- Chemical fossils (biomarkers).

Paleontology

- Scientific study of prehistoric life through fossils.
- Helps reconstruct ancient ecosystems, climates, and evolutionary history.

Why Shark Teeth Are Common Fossils

- Shark skeletons are largely cartilaginous and decompose quickly.
- Teeth are highly mineralized and preserve well.
- A shark may shed thousands of teeth during its lifetime.

I4C Warns Against Emerging 'Boss Scam' Cyber Fraud

What's the News?

The **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)** under the Ministry of Home Affairs has issued an advisory warning

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citizens and businesses about an emerging cyber fraud known as the “**Boss Scam**” or **CEO Impersonation Scam**. In this scheme, cybercriminals impersonate senior executives, company heads, or regulatory officials through emails and messaging platforms and pressure employees into making urgent financial transfers or sharing sensitive information. The fraud primarily targets corporate organizations, especially finance and accounts departments.

What is the Boss Scam?

Modus Operandi

Cybercriminals typically:

- Impersonate CEOs, Managing Directors, CFOs, or senior officials.
- Use emails, WhatsApp messages, or compromised accounts.
- Create a sense of urgency and secrecy.
- Instruct employees to:
 - Transfer funds immediately.
 - Purchase gift cards or vouchers.
 - Share confidential company information.
 - Download files or click malicious links.

The scam exploits employees' trust in organizational hierarchy and fear of questioning senior authorities.

Advanced Techniques

According to I4C, fraudsters may:

- Pose as officials from regulatory bodies such as the RBI.
- Send malware-laden attachments.
- Compromise executives' devices and messaging accounts.
- Use hacked WhatsApp accounts to communicate with employees.
- Conduct highly targeted social-engineering attacks.

Why is it a Concern?

Impact on Organisations

The scam can lead to:

- High-value financial losses.
- Leakage of confidential corporate data.
- Malware infections within company networks.
- Reputational damage.
- Business disruption.

Finance and accounts departments are considered particularly vulnerable because they regularly handle payment authorizations.

Growing Trend

I4C observed an increasing number of such targeted attacks against corporate executives and organizations. Similar CEO impersonation scams globally have caused

substantial financial losses by exploiting authority and urgency.

Preventive Measures Suggested by I4C For Employees

- Verify financial requests through independent channels.
- Confirm instructions through a phone call or face-to-face communication.
- Be cautious of urgent requests demanding secrecy.
- Do not click suspicious links or open unknown attachments.
- Report suspicious communications immediately.

For Organisations

- Establish multi-level approval systems for financial transactions.
- Implement strong cybersecurity controls.
- Conduct regular employee awareness training.
- Use multi-factor authentication (MFA).
- Monitor executive accounts for suspicious activity.

Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)

- Established by: **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**
- Purpose: National coordination and response mechanism for cybercrime.
- Acts as the nodal agency for combating cybercrime in India.

Initiatives

- **National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal**
 - Website: cybercrime.gov.in
- **National Cyber Crime Helpline – 1930**
- Cyber threat analytics and intelligence sharing.
- Cybercrime awareness campaigns through **CyberDost**.

Additional Info

Social Engineering Attack

A social engineering attack is a cybercrime technique that manipulates human psychology rather than exploiting technical vulnerabilities.

Common examples:

- Phishing
- Spear Phishing
- Vishing (Voice Phishing)
- Smishing (SMS Phishing)
- CEO/Boss Impersonation Scams

If You Become a Victim

- Immediately call **1930**.
- Report the incident on the **National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal**.
- Inform the concerned bank or financial institution without delay.

NASA's Perseverance Rover Detects Complex Carbon Molecules on Mars

What's the News?

NASA's **Perseverance** **Rover** has detected **complex macromolecular carbon** in ancient Martian rocks collected from the **Bright Angel outcrop** in **Neretva Vallis**, within **Jezero Crater**. The discovery represents one of the strongest pieces of evidence yet that Mars once possessed conditions favourable for life. However, scientists have clarified that the finding **does not confirm ancient microbial life**, as the carbon compounds could have originated through either biological or non-biological processes.

The Discovery

Findings

- Perseverance identified **macromolecular carbon (MMC)** in two ancient mudstone samples.
- The rocks were collected from:
 - Bright Angel outcrop**
 - Neretva Vallis**, an ancient river channel flowing into Jezero Crater.
- The carbon was detected using the rover's **SHERLOC** instrument.

Why It Matters

- Complex carbon compounds are the fundamental building blocks of organic chemistry.
- On Earth, similar compounds are associated with:
 - Microbial fossils.
 - Organic matter.
 - Biological processes.
- They can also be produced through:
 - Rock-water chemical reactions.
 - Volcanic or hydrothermal activity.
 - Meteorite impacts. Therefore, the discovery **indicates past habitability but is not proof of past life**.

About Jezero Crater

- Located in the northern hemisphere of Mars.
- Approximately **45 km** in diameter.
- Believed to have contained:
 - An ancient lake.
 - River deltas.
 - Sedimentary deposits billions of years ago.
- Considered one of the most promising locations for searching for evidence of ancient Martian life.

The presence of water-rich environments makes Jezero Crater a prime site for astrobiological investigations.

SHERLOC Instrument

SHERLOC stands for:

Scanning Habitable Environments with Raman & Luminescence for Organics & Chemicals

Functions

- Detects organic molecules and minerals.
- Uses ultraviolet laser spectroscopy.
- Maps the distribution of carbon-bearing compounds on rock surfaces.
- Helps identify potential biosignatures for future laboratory analysis.

Perseverance Mission

Overview

- Agency:** NASA
- Launch:** 30 July 2020
- Landing on Mars:** 18 February 2021
- Landing Site:** Jezero Crater

Mission Objectives

- Search for signs of ancient microbial life.
- Study Martian geology and climate.
- Collect and cache rock samples for possible return to Earth.
- Demonstrate technologies for future human exploration.

Additional Info

Why the Discovery Is Important

- Strengthens the hypothesis that ancient Mars had environments capable of supporting life.
- Confirms that complex organic carbon is present in multiple regions of Mars.
- Provides promising samples for future laboratory analysis on Earth, if returned through a Mars sample return mission.
- Advances the field of **astrobiology** and the search for extraterrestrial life.

Organic Molecules vs Evidence of Life

- Organic (carbon-containing) molecules **are not themselves evidence of life**.
- They may form through:
 - Biological activity.
 - Abiotic geological processes.
 - Chemical reactions in space.
- Definitive confirmation of ancient life would require detailed laboratory examination of Martian samples on Earth.

India Commissions World's First Nuclear Process Heat-Based Hydrogen Production Facility

What's the News?

India has commissioned the **world's first hydrogen production facility** that uses **nuclear process heat** instead of

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electricity for hydrogen generation. The technology demonstration plant has been established at the **Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR)**, Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu, through a collaboration between IGCAR and the **Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)**. The facility uses heat from the **Fast Breeder Test Reactor (FBTR)** and marks a significant milestone in India's clean energy and nuclear technology programmes.

Nuclear Heat-Based Hydrogen Production

- First facility globally to produce hydrogen using **nuclear process heat** through the **Copper-Chlorine (Cu-Cl) Thermochemical Cycle**.
- Demonstrates the integration of advanced nuclear technology with clean hydrogen production.
- Supports India's transition towards a **low-carbon economy** and strengthens energy security.

How the Technology Works

- Uses **high-temperature heat** generated by the **Fast Breeder Test Reactor (FBTR)**.
- Employs the **Copper-Chlorine (Cu-Cl) Thermochemical Cycle** to split water into hydrogen and oxygen.
- Requires significantly less electricity than conventional electrolysis because most of the energy comes from reactor heat.
- Produces **carbon-free hydrogen** without greenhouse gas emissions during production.

Fast Breeder Test Reactor (FBTR)

Key Facts

- **Location:** IGCAR, Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu.
- **Commissioned:** 1985.
- **Type:** Sodium-cooled Fast Breeder Reactor.
- India's only operational fast reactor research facility.
- Forms an important component of India's **Three-Stage Nuclear Power Programme**.
- Supplies the process heat used in the hydrogen production facility.

Copper-Chlorine (Cu-Cl) Thermochemical Cycle

- A thermochemical process for splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen.
- Uses a series of chemical reactions involving copper and chlorine compounds.

- Operates at a maximum temperature of about **530°C**, considerably lower than many other thermochemical hydrogen production methods.
- Lower electricity requirement improves overall energy efficiency.

Additional Info

- **Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR)**
 - Autonomous institute under the **Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)**.
 - Headquarters: Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu.
 - Focuses on fast reactor technology and advanced nuclear fuel cycles.
- **Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)**
 - India's premier nuclear research institution.
 - Headquarters: Mumbai.
 - Developed the indigenous **Cu-Cl thermochemical process**.
- **Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)**
 - Established: **1954**.
 - Functions directly under the Prime Minister.
 - Responsible for India's nuclear energy programme.
- **National Green Hydrogen Mission**
 - Approved in **2023**.
 - Objective:
 - Make India a global hub for production, utilisation and export of green hydrogen.
 - Reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels.
 - Promote decarbonisation of hard-to-abate sectors.
- **India's Three-Stage Nuclear Power Programme**
 - **Stage I:** Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) using natural uranium.
 - **Stage II:** Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs) using plutonium fuel.
 - **Stage III:** Thorium-based reactors utilising India's abundant thorium reserves.

Agriculture

India Expands Ethanol Fuel Network with Target of 5,000 Stations by 2027

What's the News?

- India is accelerating the expansion of its **ethanol-based fuel infrastructure** to support cleaner transportation and reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels.
- The government plans to establish around **5,000 ethanol fuel stations by the end of 2027**, significantly expanding the current network.
- Initial rollout is focused on major urban centres including **Delhi-NCR, Pune, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai**.
- The initiative supports India's broader goals of **energy security, emission reduction, and biofuel promotion**.

Ethanol Fuel Network Expansion

- Ethanol fuel stations will primarily supply:
 - E100 (100% ethanol fuel)** for compatible vehicles.
 - Higher ethanol blends for flex-fuel vehicles.
- The expansion is being undertaken in coordination with:
 - Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs)**.
 - Automobile manufacturers developing **flex-fuel vehicle technology**.
- The programme aims to create a nationwide ecosystem for ethanol production, distribution and consumption.

Why is Ethanol Important?

- Ethanol** is a renewable biofuel produced mainly from:
 - Sugarcane juice
 - Molasses
 - Damaged food grains
 - Surplus agricultural produce
- Benefits include:
 - Reduced crude oil imports.
 - Lower greenhouse gas emissions.
 - Additional income opportunities for farmers.
 - Diversification of agricultural markets.

Link with India's Biofuel Strategy

- The initiative aligns with the **National Policy on Biofuels, 2018**.
- Supports India's target of increasing biofuel usage in the transport sector.

- Complements the ongoing **Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme**.
- India has already achieved the milestone of **20% ethanol blending (E20)** ahead of the original target timeline.

Additional Info

National Policy on Biofuels, 2018

- Promotes production and use of biofuels in India.
- Categorises biofuels into:
 - Basic Biofuels**
 - First Generation (1G) Bioethanol
 - Biodiesel
 - Advanced Biofuels**
 - Second Generation (2G) Ethanol
 - Bio-CNG
 - Aviation Biofuel
- Encourages use of surplus food grains and agricultural residues for ethanol production.

Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme

- Implemented by the Government of India to blend ethanol with petrol.
- Objectives:
 - Reduce import dependence.
 - Improve farmer incomes.
 - Lower vehicular emissions.
 - Promote circular economy in agriculture.

Flex-Fuel Vehicles

- Vehicles capable of operating on:
 - Petrol
 - Ethanol blends
 - Pure ethanol (E100), depending on engine design.
- Considered a key technology for expanding ethanol consumption.

BIS Releases IS 20201:2026

Standard for Community Seed Banks

What's the News?

- The **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** has released **IS 20201:2026 – Community Seed Bank Management: Requirements**.
- The standard provides a uniform framework for establishing and managing **Community Seed Banks (CSBs)** across India.
- It aims to conserve **indigenous crop varieties**, strengthen **agricultural biodiversity**, and improve farmers' access to locally adapted seeds.
- The initiative supports climate-resilient agriculture by promoting

preservation of traditional seeds with traits such as drought tolerance, disease resistance, and nutritional value.

Community Seed Banks (CSBs)

- **Community Seed Banks** are locally managed repositories that:
 - Collect, conserve, regenerate, and exchange seeds.
 - Preserve traditional and indigenous crop varieties.
 - Ensure farmers have access to locally adapted seeds.
 - Promote seed sovereignty and agricultural resilience.
- Importance:
 - Conserves **agrobiodiversity**.
 - Enhances resilience against climate change.
 - Supports food and nutritional security.
 - Reduces dependence on commercial seed systems.

IS 20201:2026 Standard

Key Features

- Provides standardized requirements for:
 - Seed collection and acquisition.
 - Viability and quality testing.
 - Cleaning and drying procedures.
 - Storage and documentation.
 - Quality assurance mechanisms.
 - Seed regeneration practices.
 - Risk management and continuous improvement.
- Establishes a framework for **community-led and decentralized seed conservation systems**.
- The standard is **voluntary and certifiable**.
- Available free of cost through the BIS portal.

Significance

- Helps preserve crop genetic resources threatened by:
 - Erratic rainfall.
 - Rising temperatures.
 - Prolonged droughts.
- Indigenous varieties often possess:
 - Drought tolerance.
 - Disease resistance.
 - Adaptability to local agro-climatic conditions.
 - Higher nutritional value.
- Strengthens:
 - Sustainable agriculture.
 - Food security.
 - Climate adaptation at the grassroots level.
 - Livelihood security of small and marginal farmers.

Alignment with Government Initiatives

- Complements the **National Food Security and Nutrition Mission (NFSNM)**.
 - Provides **one-time financial assistance of up to ₹50 lakh** for establishing Community Seed Banks.
- Supports objectives under:
 - **Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001.**
 - **Biological Diversity Act, 2002.**
- Contributes to:
 - **SDG 2 – Zero Hunger**
 - **SDG 13 – Climate Action**
 - **SDG 15 – Life on Land.**

Additional Info

Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)

- India's National Standards Body.
- Functions under the **Department of Consumer Affairs**, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
- Established under the **Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016**.
- Responsible for:
 - Formulating Indian Standards.
 - Conformity assessment and certification.
 - Quality assurance and standardization activities.

Institutions Involved in Developing the Standard

- **ICAR – National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR)** (Convenor).
- **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA).**
- **Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority (PPV&FRA).**
- **Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS).**
- **BAIF Development Research Foundation.**

Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra: AI-Powered WhatsApp Advisory for Oilseed Farmers

What's the News?

- The **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** has launched **Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra**, India's first **AI-powered WhatsApp advisory service** dedicated to oilseed cultivation.
- The platform provides **24×7 personalized agricultural guidance** to farmers through WhatsApp in a simple and accessible format.
- It aims to improve productivity, reduce information gaps, and support the government's efforts towards **self-reliance in edible oils**.
- The initiative is designed to deliver timely advisories on cultivation practices, pest management, weather-



related concerns, and market-linked information.

Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra

Features

- Provides instant advisory services through **WhatsApp-based AI chatbot technology**.
- Available round-the-clock for farmers.
- Offers guidance on:
 - Crop selection and cultivation practices.
 - Seed varieties and sowing methods.
 - Nutrient management.
 - Pest and disease management.
 - Irrigation practices.
 - Harvesting and post-harvest management.
- Delivers location-specific and crop-specific recommendations.
- Reduces dependence on physical extension services.

Beneficiaries

- Farmers cultivating major oilseed crops such as:
 - Mustard
 - Groundnut
 - Soybean
 - Sunflower
 - Sesame
 - Safflower
 - Niger
 - Castor

Significance

- Strengthens the agricultural extension ecosystem through digital technology.
- Enhances dissemination of scientific recommendations developed by **ICAR** institutes.
- Improves decision-making by farmers through real-time information access.
- Supports increased oilseed production and productivity.
- Contributes to reducing India's dependence on imported edible oils.
- Promotes inclusive access to agricultural knowledge using a widely used communication platform.

Oilseed Sector in India

Importance

- Oilseeds are India's second most important agricultural commodity group after food grains.
- They are a major source of:
 - Edible oils.
 - Livestock feed.
 - Industrial raw materials.
 - Farmer income diversification.

Challenges

- Low productivity compared to global standards.

- Dependence on monsoon conditions.
- Pest and disease outbreaks.
- Fragmented landholdings.
- Significant edible oil import dependence.

National Mission on Edible Oils – Oilseeds (NMEO-Oilseeds)

Overview

- A centrally sponsored scheme aimed at boosting domestic oilseed production.
- Focuses on:
 - Increasing acreage under oilseeds.
 - Enhancing productivity through improved technologies.
 - Strengthening seed systems.
 - Promoting climate-resilient cultivation practices.

Additional Info

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)

- Autonomous organization under the **Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE)**, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- Apex national body for:
 - Agricultural research.
 - Education.
 - Extension services.
- Coordinates a nationwide network of:
 - Research institutes.
 - Agricultural universities.
 - Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs).

Agricultural Extension Services

- Aim to transfer scientific agricultural knowledge from research institutions to farmers.
- Major tools include:
 - **Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs)**.
 - Digital agriculture platforms.
 - Mobile-based advisory services.
 - Farmer training programmes.

Centre Launches AI-Based Smart Warehousing System

What's the News?

The Union Government has launched an **AI and IoT-enabled Smart Warehousing System** for the **Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC)** to modernize foodgrain and general warehousing operations. The system enables real-time monitoring of warehouse activities, automates key processes, and enhances transparency, efficiency, and safety across the storage network. The initiative is part of the government's broader push toward digital transformation of India's agricultural and logistics infrastructure.



Smart Warehousing System

The Smart Warehousing System integrates **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, **Internet of Things (IoT)**, **FASTag technology**, and **automated monitoring tools** to provide end-to-end visibility of warehouse operations.

Features

- Real-time monitoring of warehouse operations.
- FASTag and ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition)-based gate automation.
- AI-powered bag counting and stock verification.
- Intelligent access control systems.
- Environmental monitoring for temperature and humidity.
- Automated alerts for safety and operational risks.
- Centralized digital dashboard for monitoring multiple warehouses.

Coverage

- Implemented across **215 CWC warehouses**.
- Integrated with **150 Food Corporation of India (FCI) warehouses** for improved storage management and monitoring.

Benefits for Foodgrain Management

Operational Improvements

- Reduces manual intervention in warehouse processes.
- Enhances inventory accuracy and stock visibility.
- Improves turnaround time for vehicle movement.
- Enables predictive maintenance and risk detection.
- Strengthens quality control and compliance monitoring.

Agricultural Significance

- Reduces post-harvest losses.
- Improves foodgrain storage efficiency.
- Supports food security objectives.
- Strengthens supply chain resilience and logistics management.

Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC)

- Established in **1957**.
- Statutory body under the **Warehousing Corporations Act, 1962**.
- Functions under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
- Provides scientific storage and logistics services for agricultural and industrial commodities.

Functions

- Warehousing of foodgrains and agricultural produce.
- Custom bonded warehousing.
- Inland Container Depots (ICDs) and logistics services.

- Support for procurement, storage, and distribution operations.

Additional Info

Warehousing Corporations Act, 1962

- Provides the legal framework for:
 - Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC).
 - State Warehousing Corporations (SWCs).
- Enables scientific storage and logistics support for agricultural commodities.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Agriculture & Logistics

Applications include:

- Demand forecasting.
- Inventory optimization.
- Automated stock assessment.
- Predictive maintenance.
- Supply chain monitoring.
- Risk and anomaly detection.

Indori Malwi Potato, Garadu and Balam Kakdi Receive GI Tag

What's the News?

Three agricultural products from **Madhya Pradesh—Indori Malwi Potato, Garadu (tuber), and Balam Kakdi (cucumber)**—have been granted the **Geographical Indication (GI) tag** by the **GI Registry, Chennai**. The recognition acknowledges their unique qualities linked to the climate, soil, and traditional cultivation practices of the Malwa region. The GI tags are expected to enhance product branding, improve farmers' incomes, and boost export potential.

Indori Malwi Potato

- One of **12 agricultural products** from Madhya Pradesh that received GI recognition.
- Key characteristics:
 - **Low sugar** and **low starch** content.
 - Retains a **white colour after frying**, making it ideal for chips and French fries.
- Widely used in Indore's famous street foods:
 - Poha
 - Aloo Chaat
 - Aloo Bada
 - Khopra Petis
- Cultivation:
 - Around **45,000 hectares** in Indore district.
 - Grown by approximately **30,000–35,000 farmers**.



- Major buyers include **ITC, PepsiCo, McCain, Balaji, Hyfun Foods, and Mahindra.**

Garadu and Balam Kakdi

Garadu

- A **starchy edible tuber** popular across the **Malwa region**.
- Traditionally consumed during winter after deep-frying and seasoning with spices and lemon.
- Cultivated on nearly **120 hectares**.

Balam Kakdi

- A distinctive **large-sized cucumber** grown mainly in **Sailana (Ratlam district)**.
- Known for:
 - Large size
 - Juicy pulp
 - Unique colour
- Cultivated on around **100 hectares** and consumed as a summer fruit/snack.

What is a Geographical Indication (GI) Tag?

- A **Geographical Indication (GI)** is an **Intellectual Property Right (IPR)** granted to products whose:
 - Quality,
 - Reputation, or
 - Other characteristics are essentially attributable to their geographical origin.
- GI protection prevents unauthorized use of the product name by producers outside the designated geographical area.
- Benefits include:
 - Premium market value
 - Brand protection
 - Rural livelihood promotion
 - Export opportunities
 - Preservation of traditional knowledge and farming practices.

Additional Info

- GI Registration in India**
 - Governed by the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**.
 - Came into force in **2003**.
 - Administered by the **Geographical Indications Registry, Chennai**, under the **Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks**.
- Validity**
 - GI registration is valid for **10 years**.
 - Can be **renewed indefinitely** for successive 10-year periods.
- Other GI-tagged Products of Madhya Pradesh**

- Ratlami Sev
- Kadakhnath Chicken
- Chinnor Rice
- Sundarja Mango
- Riwan (Raiwan) Garlic

NAFED & NCCF to Procure Pulses and Oilseeds Directly from Farmers

What's the News?

Union Home and Cooperation Minister **Amit Shah** has directed the **National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation (NAFED)** and the **National Cooperative Consumers' Federation (NCCF)** to procure pulses and oilseeds directly from farmers, eliminating intermediaries. The initiative aims to ensure farmers receive the full benefit of the **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** through direct procurement and timely digital payments, while strengthening India's self-reliance in pulses and edible oils.

Direct Procurement Initiative

- NAFED and NCCF have been asked to procure **every grain** of pulses and oilseeds directly from farmers.
- The government has set a **two-year target** to establish a nationwide direct procurement system.
- Farmers' payments are to be credited **directly into their bank accounts within 48 hours**, ensuring transparency and reducing dependence on middlemen.
- The initiative seeks to:
 - Ensure MSP benefits reach actual cultivators.
 - Increase farmers' income.
 - Encourage greater cultivation of pulses and oilseeds.
 - Reduce import dependence and improve food security.

NAFED's New Digital Initiatives

Four major initiatives were launched to modernize procurement and cooperative operations:

1. NAFEX.in

- Digital auction platform for pulses and oilseeds.
- Enables transparent and efficient online auctions.
- Replaces dependence on private auction platforms.

2. DRISHTI

- Digital inventory management and monitoring system.
- Provides real-time stock tracking and analytics.

3. SAKSHAM ERP

- Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) platform.
- Integrates procurement, finance, logistics and operations for better governance.

4. NAFED Kalyan Fund

- Scholarship scheme for children of farmer families.
- Funded through **1% of NAFED's annual profits** to support higher education and career development.

About NAFED

- Apex cooperative marketing organization under the Ministry of Cooperation.
- **Established:** 1958.
- Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Promotes cooperative marketing of agricultural produce.
- Acts as a central procurement agency for pulses, oilseeds and copra under the **Price Support Scheme (PSS)**.

About NCCF

- National-level cooperative federation engaged in procurement and distribution of essential commodities.
- Functions under the cooperative sector to stabilize prices and support farmers and consumers.
- Plays a major role in procurement of pulses, onions, and other essential agricultural commodities.

Additional Info

- **Minimum Support Price (MSP)**
 - Announced by the Government of India for selected crops.
 - Intended to guarantee remunerative prices to farmers.
 - Recommended by the **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)**.
- **PM-AASHA (Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan)**
 - Umbrella scheme launched in **2018**.
 - Aims to ensure remunerative prices to farmers.
 - Includes:
 - **Price Support Scheme (PSS)** – Physical procurement of pulses, oilseeds and copra.
 - **Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS)**.
 - **Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPSS)**.
- **Ministry Involved**
 - Ministry of Cooperation.

Important Days

Global Wind Day 2026: Accelerating the Global Clean Energy Transition

What's the News?

Global Wind Day is observed every year on **15 June** to raise awareness about the importance of wind energy in achieving sustainable development, energy security, and climate goals. The 2026 observance gained significance as India reaffirmed its commitment to expanding wind power capacity, targeting **100 GW by 2030** and **155 GW by 2035**, positioning wind energy as a key pillar of the country's renewable energy strategy.

Global Wind Day

About the Day

- Annual global event dedicated to promoting wind energy.
- Celebrates the role of wind power in providing clean, affordable, and sustainable electricity.
- Encourages public awareness, industry collaboration, and policy support for renewable energy.

Organised By

- **Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC)**
- **WindEurope**
- National governments, industry associations, and renewable energy stakeholders worldwide.

Objectives

- Promote renewable energy adoption.
- Reduce dependence on fossil fuels.
- Address climate change and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Encourage investments in wind energy infrastructure.
- Create awareness about technological advancements in the wind sector.

Wind Energy in India

Current Status

- Installed wind energy capacity exceeds **56 GW**.
- India is among the world's leading wind power producers.
- Wind energy is the second-largest renewable energy source after solar power.

National Targets

Target Year	Wind Capacity Goal
2030	100 GW
2035	155 GW

Key Wind Power States

- Tamil Nadu
- Gujarat
- Karnataka

- Rajasthan
- Maharashtra
- Andhra Pradesh

Importance of Wind Energy

Environmental Benefits

- Zero fuel consumption during operation.
- Minimal greenhouse gas emissions.
- Reduces dependence on coal and other fossil fuels.
- Supports climate mitigation efforts.

Economic Benefits

- Generates employment in manufacturing, installation, and maintenance.
- Attracts investments in renewable energy infrastructure.
- Reduces long-term electricity generation costs.

Energy Security

- Diversifies India's energy mix.
- Reduces dependence on imported fuels.
- Enhances resilience of the power sector.

India's Renewable Energy Roadmap

National Commitments

- **500 GW non-fossil fuel electricity capacity by 2030.**
- **Net Zero emissions by 2070.**
- Fulfilment of India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.

Supporting Initiatives

National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy (2018)

- Promotes integration of wind and solar energy projects.
- Improves grid stability and land-use efficiency.

Green Energy Corridor Project

- Strengthens transmission infrastructure for renewable energy evacuation.

Offshore Wind Energy Policy (2015)

- Facilitates development of offshore wind projects along India's coastline.

Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO)

- Mandates electricity distribution companies and certain consumers to procure a specified share of power from renewable sources.

Global Wind Energy Scenario

Leading Wind Energy Countries

China

- United States
- Germany
- India
- Spain



Emerging Trends

- Offshore wind energy expansion.
- Larger and more efficient wind turbines.
- Hybrid renewable energy parks.
- Integration with energy storage systems.
- Green hydrogen production using renewable electricity.

Additional Info

Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC)

- International industry organisation representing the global wind energy sector.
- Headquarters: Lisbon, Portugal.
- Publishes annual **Global Wind Report**.

National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE)

- Autonomous institution under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).
- Headquarters: Chennai.
- Responsible for:
 - Wind resource assessment.
 - Wind turbine testing and certification.
 - Research and development in wind technologies.

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)

- Nodal ministry for renewable energy development in India.
- Oversees policies relating to:
 - Solar energy
 - Wind energy
 - Bioenergy
 - Green hydrogen
 - Small hydro power

World Crocodile Day 2026

What's the News?

World Crocodile Day is observed annually on **17 June** to raise awareness about crocodilian species, their ecological importance, and conservation challenges. The 2026 observance highlighted global efforts to protect crocodiles, alligators, caimans, and gharials, while showcasing India's notable success in crocodile conservation through initiatives such as **Project Crocodile**.

World Crocodile Day

Purpose

The day aims to:

- Raise awareness about crocodilian conservation.
- Highlight threats faced by crocodile species.
- Promote habitat protection and biodiversity conservation.

- Encourage scientific research and community participation.

Theme for 2026

"Connecting Crocodiles and Communities"

- Emphasizes coexistence between humans and crocodilians.
- Promotes community-led conservation initiatives.
- Focuses on reducing human-wildlife conflict.

Crocodilians: An Overview

Order Crocodylia

The crocodilian group includes:

- Crocodiles
- Alligators
- Caimans
- Gharials

Ecological Importance

- Apex predators in aquatic ecosystems.
- Maintain ecological balance by regulating prey populations.
- Indicators of healthy wetland and river ecosystems.
- Contribute to nutrient cycling and biodiversity conservation.

Crocodiles in India

India is home to three crocodilian species:

Species	Scientific Name	IUCN Status
Mugger Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>	Vulnerable
Saltwater Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus porosus</i>	Least Concern
Gharial	<i>Gavialis gangeticus</i>	Critically Endangered

Distribution

Mugger Crocodile

- Rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and marshes across India.

Saltwater Crocodile

- Eastern coast and mangrove ecosystems.
- Significant population in the Bhitarkanika National Park.

Gharial

- Major river systems of northern India.
- Found in the:
 - National Chambal Sanctuary
 - Girwa River
 - Son River basin

Project Crocodile

Background

- Launched in **1975** with support from the **United Nations Development Programme** and the **Food and Agriculture Organization**.
- One of India's earliest species-recovery programmes.

Objectives

- Protect crocodile habitats.



- Establish captive breeding programmes.
- Reintroduce crocodiles into the wild.
- Conduct scientific monitoring and research.

Achievements

- Significant recovery of Mugger and Saltwater Crocodile populations.
- Improvement in Gharial conservation efforts.
- Establishment of crocodile breeding and rehabilitation centres.

Major Threats to Crocodilians

Habitat Loss

- Wetland degradation.
- River modification through dams and barrages.
- Encroachment of breeding habitats.

Human-Wildlife Conflict

- Increased interaction between humans and crocodiles.
- Livestock predation and accidental encounters.

Illegal Activities

- Poaching for skin and body parts.
- Illegal fishing practices.

Climate Change

- Rising temperatures affecting nesting success.
- Altered river and wetland ecosystems.

India's Conservation Success

Bhitarkanika Model

The mangrove ecosystem of **Bhitarkanika** in Odisha has become one of the world's most successful saltwater crocodile conservation landscapes.

Key factors:

- Protected habitat.
- Scientific monitoring.
- Community participation.
- Strict anti-poaching measures.

Gharial Recovery Efforts

- Captive breeding programmes.
- River habitat restoration.
- Conservation in protected river stretches.

Additional Info

Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

All three crocodilian species in India receive legal protection under the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.

Ramsar Sites and Crocodile Conservation

Healthy wetlands designated as **Ramsar Convention** sites play a crucial role in crocodile habitat conservation.

IUCN Red List

The **International Union for Conservation of Nature** assesses the conservation status of species worldwide.

World Day to Combat

Desertification and Drought 2026: Focus on Rangeland Restoration

What's the News?

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought was observed globally to raise awareness about land degradation, desertification, and drought. The 2026 observance focuses on the theme **"Rangelands: Recognize. Respect. Restore."**, highlighting the importance of rangelands in climate resilience, food security, water conservation, biodiversity protection, and sustaining pastoral communities. Governments, international organizations, and civil society groups used the occasion to promote sustainable land management and ecosystem restoration.

Desertification and Drought Day 2026

Theme

"Rangelands: Recognize. Respect. Restore."

Why Rangelands Matter?

- Cover **more than 50% of the Earth's land surface**.
- Support livestock production, biodiversity, and water cycles.
- Provide livelihoods for pastoralists and Indigenous communities.
- Act as natural carbon sinks, enhancing climate resilience.
- **Nearly half of global rangelands are degraded or at risk of degradation.**

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

Overview

- Established in **1994** following the Rio Earth Summit.
- Sole legally binding international agreement linking environmental protection with sustainable land management.
- Aims to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought through national and international cooperation.

Features

- Focuses on sustainable land management.
- Promotes **Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)**.
- Supports drought resilience and ecosystem restoration.
- Organizes Conference of Parties (COP) meetings to review progress.

India's Land Restoration Efforts

- India has restored approximately **21.7 million hectares** of degraded land.

- National target: **26 million hectares by 2030.**
- Land restoration contributes to climate action, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable agriculture.

Additional Info

Desertification

- Land degradation occurring in arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid regions.
- Driven by:
 - Unsustainable agriculture
 - Overgrazing
 - Deforestation
 - Climate change
 - Water mismanagement

Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)

- A state where the quantity and quality of land resources remain stable or increase.
- Target promoted under UNCCD and linked to sustainable development goals.

Autistic Pride Day 2026: Celebrating Neurodiversity and Inclusion

What's the News?

Autistic Pride Day was observed to promote understanding, acceptance, and inclusion of autistic individuals. The observance emphasizes the concept of **neurodiversity**, recognizing autism as a natural variation in human cognition rather than a condition that defines limitations. Governments, advocacy groups, educators, and healthcare professionals used the occasion to highlight the rights, dignity, and contributions of autistic persons while encouraging inclusive societies.

Autistic Pride Day

Significance

- Celebrates the identity, achievements, and strengths of autistic individuals.
- Promotes acceptance and inclusion rather than focusing solely on awareness.
- Encourages equal opportunities in education, employment, healthcare, and public life.
- Supports self-advocacy and the participation of autistic persons in decision-making processes.

Objectives

- Reduce stigma and misconceptions associated with autism.
- Foster inclusive educational and workplace environments.
- Promote respect for diverse ways of thinking and learning.

- Strengthen support systems for autistic individuals and their families.

Neurodiversity

What is Neurodiversity?

- A concept that views neurological differences as natural variations of the human brain.
- Recognizes that people process information, communicate, and learn differently.
- Encourages society to accommodate diverse cognitive abilities rather than treating them as deficits.

Conditions Included

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Tourette Syndrome

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Overview

- A neurodevelopmental condition that affects communication, social interaction, sensory processing, and behavior.
- Called a "spectrum" because characteristics and support needs vary among individuals.
- Early identification and appropriate support can significantly improve quality of life.

Common Challenges

- Social exclusion and discrimination.
- Limited access to specialized education and healthcare services.
- Employment and workplace barriers.
- Inadequate awareness and support infrastructure.

India's Legal and Policy Framework

Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(RPwD) Act, 2016

- Recognizes Autism Spectrum Disorder as a benchmark disability.
- Guarantees:
 - Equal opportunities.
 - Inclusive education.
 - Reservation in higher education and public employment.
 - Protection from discrimination.

National Trust Act, 1999

- Supports welfare and empowerment of persons with:
 - Autism
 - Cerebral Palsy
 - Intellectual Disabilities
 - Multiple Disabilities



Inclusive Education Initiatives

- Samagra Shiksha Scheme promotes inclusive education for children with disabilities.
- Emphasis on assistive technologies, special educators, and barrier-free learning environments.

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 14** – Equality before law.
- **Article 15** – Prohibition of discrimination.
- **Article 21** – Right to life and dignity.
- **Article 41** – Provision for assistance to persons with disabilities (Directive Principles of State Policy).

United Nations Public Service Day 2026

What's the News?

United Nations Public Service Day is observed every year on **23 June** to recognize the value of public service, honour the contribution of public servants, and promote effective, accountable, and inclusive public institutions. In 2026, the observance coincides with the **United Nations Public Service Forum** in **Tbilisi, Georgia**, focusing on innovation and inclusive governance.

Theme for 2026

"Transforming Public Institutions: Advancing Innovation, Participation, and Inclusion."

The theme emphasizes:

- Modernizing public institutions through innovation.
- Encouraging citizen participation in governance.
- Building inclusive, transparent, and accountable public administration.
- Strengthening institutions to achieve the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA)

- Established by the **United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** in **2003**.
- Recognizes excellence and innovation in public administration worldwide.
- Rewards initiatives that improve:
 - Public service delivery.
 - Digital governance.
 - Institutional effectiveness.
 - Inclusive and citizen-centric governance.
- Presented annually during the **UN Public Service Forum**.

Additional Info

History

- Proclaimed by the **UN General Assembly** through **Resolution A/RES/57/277** on **20 December 2002**.
- First observed in **2003**.
- Observed annually on **23 June**.

Organising Agency

- **United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)**.
- Specifically coordinated through the **Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG)**.

2026 UN Public Service Forum

- **Venue:** Tbilisi, Georgia.
- **Organised by:** UN DESA and the Government of Georgia.
- Key focus areas:
 - Digital transformation.
 - Capacity building.
 - Good governance.
 - Innovation in public institutions.
 - Public Service Awards ceremony.

Olympic Day 2026

What's the News?

Olympic Day is observed every year on **23 June** to commemorate the founding of the **International Olympic Committee (IOC)** in **1894** and to promote the Olympic values of **Excellence, Friendship, and Respect**. The day encourages people of all ages and abilities to participate in sports and physical activity while fostering unity, inclusion, and healthy lifestyles.

Theme for 2026

"You can do this. Let's Move"

History of Olympic Day

- The **International Olympic Committee (IOC)** was founded on **23 June 1894** at the **Sorbonne, Paris**, on the initiative of **Baron Pierre de Coubertin**, regarded as the father of the modern Olympic Games.
- The first **Olympic Day** was celebrated in **1948** following a decision taken at the **42nd IOC Session** held in **St. Moritz, Switzerland**.
- Initially observed by a few National Olympic Committees (NOCs), it is now celebrated globally.

Additional Info

- **International Olympic Committee (IOC)**
 - Founded: **23 June 1894**



- Founder: **Baron Pierre de Coubertin**
- Headquarters: **Lausanne, Switzerland**
- Current President: **Kirsty Coventry**
- **Olympic Motto**
 - **Citius, Altius, Fortius – Communiter**
 - Meaning: **Faster, Higher, Stronger – Together**
- **Olympic Symbol**
 - Five interlocking rings represent the **five inhabited continents**:
 - Africa
 - Americas
 - Asia
 - Europe
 - Oceania
 - Symbolize unity through sport.

International Day of Women in Diplomacy 2026

What's the News?

The **International Day of Women in Diplomacy** is observed annually on **24 June** to recognize the contributions of women in diplomacy and international relations and to promote their **full, equal and meaningful participation** in decision-making at all levels. The observance highlights the importance of gender equality in diplomacy, peacebuilding and global governance.

History

- The **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** proclaimed **24 June** as the **International Day of Women in Diplomacy** through **Resolution A/RES/76/269**.
- The resolution was adopted by **consensus in 2022**.
- Member States, UN organizations, academic institutions and civil society are encouraged to observe the day through awareness campaigns, educational activities and events promoting women in diplomacy.

Additional Info

Women in Diplomacy

- Women remain underrepresented in senior diplomatic positions globally.
- Increasing women's participation aligns with:
 - **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 – Gender Equality**.
 - **SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**.

- The UN emphasizes that inclusive diplomacy leads to more effective and representative global governance.

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

- One of the **six principal organs** of the United Nations.
- Comprises **all 193 UN Member States**.
- Each Member State has **one vote**.
- Responsible for discussing and making recommendations on international issues, adopting the UN budget and electing members to various UN bodies.

UN Resolution A/RES/76/269

- Adopted during the **76th Session of the UN General Assembly**.
- Officially established **24 June** as the **International Day of Women in Diplomacy**.
- Invites governments and organizations worldwide to organize educational and awareness activities promoting women's role in diplomacy.

World Vitiligo Day 2026: Raising Awareness for an Inclusive Society

What's the News?

World Vitiligo Day is observed every year on **25 June** to raise awareness about **vitiligo**, combat stigma and discrimination, and promote early diagnosis and equitable access to treatment. The **2026 global theme** is **"From Stigma to Strength"**, emphasising empowerment, inclusion and improved quality of life for people living with vitiligo. This year's global headquarters event is being hosted in **Chandigarh, India**, marking the return of the campaign to one of its historic centres.

Theme 2026

Theme: "From Stigma to Strength"

Focus areas:

- Promoting social acceptance and inclusion.
- Addressing myths and discrimination.
- Improving access to diagnosis and treatment.
- Supporting mental health and patient well-being.
- Encouraging research and innovation in vitiligo care.

What is Vitiligo?

- Vitiligo is a **chronic autoimmune skin disorder** in which the body's immune system attacks **melanocytes** (pigment-producing cells).
- This results in **white depigmented patches** on the skin and sometimes hair.

- It is **not contagious, not infectious, and not a form of skin cancer.**
- The condition can occur at any age and affects people irrespective of gender or ethnicity.
- Globally, it affects about **0.5–2% of the population.**

Causes and Risk Factors

The exact cause remains unknown, but major contributing factors include:

- Autoimmune response.
- Genetic predisposition.
- Oxidative stress.
- Environmental triggers.
- Emotional or physical stress (may trigger onset or progression in susceptible individuals).

Common myths

- Vitiligo is **not caused by vitamin deficiency alone.**
- It **does not spread through physical contact.**
- It is **not an infectious disease.**

Symptoms and Treatment

Symptoms

- White patches on the skin.
- Premature whitening of hair.
- Loss of pigmentation in mucous membranes in some cases.

Treatment options

- Topical corticosteroids.
- Topical calcineurin inhibitors.
- Phototherapy (NB-UVB).
- Excimer laser.
- Surgical grafting (selected cases).
- Newer immunomodulatory therapies.
- Psychological counselling and social support.

Although there is **no permanent cure**, timely treatment can help control disease progression and improve repigmentation.

Additional Info

History

- Observed annually on **25 June.**
- The date commemorates the memory of **Michael Jackson**, who had vitiligo.
- The campaign has grown into a global awareness movement involving dermatologists, researchers, patient groups and policymakers.

Hemis Festival 2026

What's the News?

The **Hemis Festival**, the largest and most celebrated Buddhist festival of **Ladakh**, was observed at the **Hemis Monastery** to commemorate the birth anniversary of **Guru Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche)**, revered as the founder of Tibetan Buddhism. The festival witnessed traditional **Cham**

(masked) dances, Buddhist rituals, prayers, and cultural performances, attracting devotees and tourists from across the world.

About Hemis Festival

- Celebrated annually at the **Hemis Monastery**, located in **Leh district, Ladakh.**
- Organised according to the **Tibetan lunar calendar.**
- Commemorates **Guru Padmasambhava**, who is credited with spreading **Vajrayana Buddhism** across Tibet and the Himalayan region.

Major Attractions

- **Cham Dance**
 - Sacred masked dance performed by Buddhist monks.
 - Symbolises the victory of good over evil.
- Display of the **Giant Thangka** (every 12 years during the Year of the Monkey).
- Traditional music, prayers and Buddhist rituals.
- Exhibition of Ladakhi handicrafts and local cuisine.

Guru Padmasambhava

- Also known as **Guru Rinpoche** ("Precious Master").
- Eighth-century Buddhist master.
- Instrumental in introducing **Vajrayana Buddhism** to Tibet.
- Revered as the "Second Buddha" in Tibetan Buddhism.

United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

What's the News?

The **United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture** is observed every year on **26 June** to reaffirm the global commitment to eradicate torture, support survivors, and ensure accountability for perpetrators. It also commemorates the entry into force of the **UN Convention against Torture (UNCAT).**

History

- **Proclaimed by:** United Nations General Assembly.
- **Resolution:** 52/149 (1997).
- **First Observed:** 1998.
- Marks the entry into force of the **Convention against Torture** on **26 June 1987.**

Objectives

- Support rehabilitation of torture victims.
- Promote justice and accountability.

- Eliminate torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.
- Raise awareness about human rights protections.

About UNCAT

Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT)

- Adopted: 1984
- Entered into force: 26 June 1987
- Legally prohibits torture under all circumstances.
- Requires State Parties to criminalise and prevent torture.

International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

What's the News?

The **International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking** is observed annually on **26 June** to strengthen global action against drug abuse, illicit trafficking and organised crime. The observance promotes prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and international cooperation to achieve a drug-free society.

History

- **Proclaimed by:** United Nations General Assembly.
- **Resolution:** 42/112 (1987).
- **First Observed:** 1988.
- Coordinated by the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**.

Objectives

- Raise awareness about the harmful effects of drug abuse.
- Prevent substance abuse through education.
- Strengthen international cooperation against drug trafficking.
- Promote treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration.

Concerns

- Synthetic drugs.
- Opioid abuse.
- Cocaine trafficking.
- Organised crime and money laundering.
- Public health and youth protection.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

- **Established:** 1997.
- **Headquarters:** Vienna, Austria.
- Works to combat:
 - Illicit drugs.
 - Transnational organised crime.
 - Corruption.
 - Terrorism.

- Publishes the **World Drug Report** annually.

Nasha Mukti Bharat Saptah 2026 Observed Nationwide

What's the News?

The **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** observed **Nasha Mukti Bharat Saptah 2026** across the country under the **Nasha Mukti Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA)**. The nationwide anti-drug awareness campaign culminated on the **International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking**, with over **1.31 crore** citizens participating in awareness and community outreach activities. The valedictory programme was held at **Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya (DSVV), Haridwar**, and was chaired by **Union Minister Dr. Virendra Kumar**.

Nasha Mukti Bharat Saptah 2026

- Raise awareness about the harmful effects of drug abuse.
- Promote a **drug-free and healthy society** through community participation.
- Strengthen drug demand reduction through a **whole-of-government and whole-of-society** approach.
- Encourage youth, educational institutions and civil society to actively participate in anti-drug initiatives.

Highlights

- More than **1.31 crore** citizens participated nationwide.
- Activities conducted included:
 - Mass pledge drives.
 - Nasha Mukti rallies.
 - Street plays (Nukkad Natak).
 - Essay, painting and slogan-writing competitions.
 - Yoga and meditation sessions.
 - Seminars, webinars and awareness campaigns.
 - **Nasha Mukti Mitra** registration drives.
- Around **4,000** participants joined the concluding anti-drug rally in Haridwar.

Announcements

- Two **Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)** were signed between the **Department of Social Justice and Empowerment** and the **Akhil Vishwa Gayatri Pariwar**.
- The collaboration aims to:
 - Strengthen grassroots awareness on substance abuse.
 - Enhance community mobilisation.



- Support **drug demand reduction** under NMBA.
- Promote senior citizen welfare under the **Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY)**.

Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA)

Overview

- Launched in **2020** by the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.
- A flagship national campaign to reduce **drug demand** through preventive education, awareness generation and community participation.
- Covers all districts of the country with a special focus on vulnerable populations.

Major Components

- Preventive education.
- Behavioural change communication.
- Capacity building.
- Community outreach.
- De-addiction and rehabilitation support.
- Participation of educational institutions, NGOs, youth organisations and volunteers.

International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

- Observed annually on **26 June**.
- Established by the **United Nations General Assembly** in **1987**.
- Coordinated globally by the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**.
- Objective:
 - Strengthen action and cooperation to achieve a world free of drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

Additional Info

- **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**
 - Nodal ministry for implementing the **Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan**.
 - Focuses on social justice, welfare and drug demand reduction.
- **Nasha Mukti Mitra**
 - A volunteer-based initiative under NMBA.
 - Supports awareness generation and community engagement against substance abuse.
- **Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY)**
 - Umbrella scheme for the welfare and empowerment of senior citizens.
 - Implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**

- Headquarters: **Vienna, Austria**.
- Established: **1997**.
- Leads global efforts against illicit drugs, organised crime and corruption.

World MSME Day 2026

What's the News?

World Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME) Day was observed globally on **27 June** to recognise the contribution of MSMEs to economic growth, employment, innovation and sustainable development. In India, the **Ministry of MSME** commemorated the occasion through the "**Udyami Bharat – MSME Day 2026**" event, where new digital initiatives and measures to strengthen the MSME ecosystem were highlighted. The event was attended by **Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar**, **Union MSME Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi**, and **Minister of State Shobha Karandlaje**.

World MSME Day

Theme

"Empowering MSMEs through Innovation and Sustainable Industrial Development."

Objectives

- Recognise the contribution of MSMEs to economic growth and employment.
- Promote entrepreneurship, innovation and digital transformation.
- Improve access to finance, technology and global markets.
- Encourage sustainable and resilient industrial development.
- Highlight the role of MSMEs in achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

Importance of MSMEs in India

Economic Contribution

- Contribute around **30% of India's GDP**.
- Account for nearly **36% of manufacturing output**.
- Generate about **45% of India's exports**.
- Employ over **28 crore people**, making the sector the second-largest source of employment after agriculture.
- Comprise more than **6.3 crore enterprises**, with the majority being micro enterprises.

Government Initiatives for MSMEs

- **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)** – Promotes self-employment through credit-linked subsidies.
- **Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTME)** – Provides collateral-free credit guarantees.
- **Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP)** – Supports MSME

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competitiveness, market access and institutional reforms.

- **Champions Portal** – ICT-based grievance redressal and handholding platform.
- **Udyam Registration Portal** – Online registration for MSMEs with simplified procedures.
- **Public Procurement Policy for MSEs** – Mandates procurement from Micro and Small Enterprises by Central Ministries and CPSEs.
- **ZED (Zero Defect Zero Effect) Certification Scheme** – Encourages quality manufacturing with environmental sustainability.
- **MSME Competitive (LEAN, Design, Incubation and IPR Components)** – Improves productivity, innovation and intellectual property protection.

Challenges Facing MSMEs

- Limited access to affordable credit.
- Delayed payments from buyers.
- Low adoption of advanced technology.
- Rising compliance costs.
- Supply-chain disruptions.
- Limited integration with global value chains.
- Skill gaps and inadequate digital adoption.

Additional Info

- **World MSME Day**
 - Declared by the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)**.
 - Observed annually on **27 June**.
 - Established through **UNGA Resolution A/RES/71/279** in **2017**.
- **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises**
 - Nodal ministry for MSME development in India.
 - Implements schemes for credit support, technology upgradation, skill development and market promotion.
- **Revised MSME Classification (2020)**

Category	Investment Limit	Annual Turnover Limit
Micro	Up to ₹1 crore	Up to ₹5 crore
Small	Up to ₹10 crore	Up to ₹50 crore
Medium	Up to ₹50 crore	Up to ₹250 crore

State Affairs

MAHA Water Mission Launched to Boost Water Innovation and Startups

What's the News?

- The **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)** and the **Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS)** have jointly launched the **MAHA Water Mission**, a ₹200 crore initiative to promote innovation and entrepreneurship in the water sector.
- The mission was launched by **Dr. Jitendra Singh**, Union Minister of State for Science & Technology, along with **Union Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Patil**.
- It aims to support startups, MSMEs, research institutions, universities, and industry partners in developing scalable solutions for India's water challenges.

MAHA Water Mission

What is it?

- A national mission under the **Missions for Advancement in High-Impact Areas (MAHA)** framework of **ANRF**.
- Designed to bridge the gap between:
 - Scientific research
 - Technological innovation
 - Entrepreneurship
 - Field-level implementation
- Seeks to create practical and locally adaptable solutions for long-term water security.

Financial Support

- Total outlay: **₹200 crore**.
- Selected multidisciplinary consortia can receive funding of up to **₹20 crore**.
- Funding can be utilized for:
 - Technology development
 - Product and prototype creation
 - Field testing and validation
 - Deployment and scaling of solutions

Eligible Participants

- Startups
- MSMEs
- Universities
- National laboratories
- Research institutions
- Industry partners

These entities can collaborate through multidisciplinary consortia to develop innovative water solutions.

Priority Focus Areas

The Mission focuses on five key themes:

- **Water Resource Assessment and Sustainable Management**

- **Drinking Water Security**
- **Water Quality and Ecological Health**
- **Water Use Efficiency and Circular Economy**
- **Climate Resilience and Adaptation**

Why is the Mission Important?

Addressing Water Challenges

- Supports technology-driven solutions for:
 - Water scarcity
 - Water quality degradation
 - Climate-induced water stress
 - Efficient water use

Strengthening Innovation Ecosystem

- Encourages participation of startups and MSMEs in solving national development challenges.
- Promotes collaboration among academia, industry, and government institutions.

Supporting Water Security

- Facilitates the transition of innovations from laboratory research to field deployment.
- Contributes to India's goal of achieving sustainable and climate-resilient water management.

About ANRF

Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)

- Established under the **ANRF Act, 2023**.
- Functions as India's apex body for promoting research, innovation, and technology development.
- Seeks to expand research opportunities beyond premier institutions by supporting:
 - Universities
 - Startups
 - MSMEs
 - Emerging innovators
- Implements mission-driven programmes under the **MAHA** framework.

Additional Info

Related Government Initiatives in Water Sector

- **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)**
 - Aims to provide functional household tap water connections in rural India.
 - Recently extended under **JJM 2.0** with a focus on sustainable service delivery.
- **Jal Shakti Abhiyan**
 - National campaign focused on water conservation and rainwater harvesting.
 - Implemented across districts to address water stress.



• AMRUT 2.0

- Promotes innovative technologies and startup-led solutions for urban water management and wastewater treatment.

Odisha Selected for PM Surya Ghar Excellence Award

What's the News?

- **Odisha** has been selected for the **PM Surya Ghar Excellence Award** for its outstanding performance in implementing the **PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana**.
- The award recognizes the state's efforts in promoting rooftop solar adoption, expanding renewable energy access, and facilitating clean energy transition.
- The state government has reaffirmed its commitment to further accelerate solar energy deployment across urban and rural areas.

PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana

About the Scheme

- Launched by the **Government of India** to promote rooftop solar installations in households.
- Aims to provide affordable and clean electricity while reducing dependence on conventional energy sources.
- Encourages citizen participation in India's renewable energy transition.

Objectives

- Increase rooftop solar capacity nationwide.
- Reduce household electricity expenses.
- Promote decentralized renewable energy generation.
- Support India's climate and energy security goals.
- Generate employment in the solar sector.

Features

- Financial assistance through Central Financial Assistance (CFA).
- Simplified online application and approval process.
- Support for installation of rooftop solar systems in residential households.
- Opportunity for households to generate and utilize solar power for their own consumption.

Why Odisha Received the Award Strong Rooftop Solar Adoption

- Odisha has recorded significant progress in:
 - Rooftop solar installations.

- Beneficiary enrollment under the scheme.
- Public awareness and outreach initiatives.

Policy Support

- State-level measures have facilitated:
 - Faster approvals.
 - Improved implementation mechanisms.
 - Enhanced coordination between distribution companies and consumers.

Renewable Energy Expansion

- The state is actively promoting:
 - Solar energy generation.
 - Clean energy infrastructure.
 - Sustainable and climate-resilient development.

India's Renewable Energy Goals

National Targets

- Achieve **500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based installed electricity capacity by 2030**.
- Reduce emissions intensity of GDP.
- Increase the share of renewable energy in the national energy mix.

Role of Rooftop Solar

- Reduces transmission losses.
- Enhances energy security.
- Promotes consumer participation in power generation.
- Supports decentralized and resilient energy systems.

Additional Info

Ministry Responsible

- **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)**

Key Implementing Agencies

- **MNRE**
- **State Distribution Companies (DISCOMs)**
- **National Portal for Rooftop Solar**

Related Renewable Energy Initiatives

- **National Solar Mission**
 - Launched under the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**.
 - Promotes large-scale solar energy deployment.
- **PM-KUSUM Scheme**
 - Supports solarization of agriculture.
 - Enables farmers to install solar pumps and decentralized solar plants.
- **Green Energy Corridor**
 - Strengthens transmission infrastructure for renewable energy integration.



Madhya Pradesh Removes Two-Child Norm for Government Jobs

What's the News?

- The **Madhya Pradesh Government** has decided to withdraw the long-standing **two-child norm** linked to eligibility for government employment.
- Chief Minister **Mohan Yadav** directed the removal of the provision from the draft civil services rules and ordered preparation of a revised draft.
- The decision ends a policy that disqualified candidates with more than two living children from government recruitment and departmental appointments.

What was the Two-Child Norm?

- The provision was introduced as part of population-control measures in **2001**.
- Under the rule:
 - Candidates having more than two living children beyond the prescribed cut-off period were ineligible for government jobs.
 - The restriction applied to both direct recruitment and certain departmental appointments.
- The norm was also linked to service conduct regulations for government employees.

Changes

- The state government has:
 - Withdrawn the draft provision prescribing a two-child limit.
 - Directed immediate removal of the provision from the official portal.
 - Ordered publication of a revised draft without the restriction.
- Candidates with more than two children will no longer face automatic disqualification for government employment under the proposed rules.

Two-Child Norm in India

- Several states have adopted two-child norms at different times for:
 - Government employment.
 - Local body elections.
 - Welfare benefits.
- The rationale has generally been:
 - Population stabilization.
 - Promotion of small-family norms.
- However, such provisions have also generated debates regarding:
 - Reproductive rights.
 - Equity in public employment.
 - Demographic and social impacts.

Additional Info

Population Policy in India

- Population is placed in the **Concurrent List (Entry 20A)**, allowing both the Union and States to legislate on population-related matters.
- India's approach to population stabilization focuses on:
 - Family planning services.
 - Maternal and child healthcare.
 - Women's education and empowerment.
 - Access to reproductive healthcare.

National Population Policy (NPP), 2000

- Objective:
 - Achieve population stabilization while ensuring reproductive health rights.
- Key goals:
 - Universal access to contraception.
 - Reduction in infant and maternal mortality.
 - Promotion of informed family planning choices.

Constitutional Dimensions

- **Article 14** – Equality before law.
- **Article 16** – Equality of opportunity in public employment.
- **Article 21** – Protection of life and personal liberty.
- Debates surrounding two-child norms often involve balancing these constitutional principles with population-control objectives.

Odisha Restores Original Odia Spellings of 64 Place Names

What's the News?

- The **Odisha Cabinet** has approved the restoration of the original **Odia spellings and names of 64 places** across the state.
- The initiative seeks to correct colonial-era and anglicized spellings that distorted the linguistic and cultural identity of Odisha.
- The decision aims to preserve **Odia heritage, language authenticity, and historical identity** in official records, maps, signages, and government communications.

Restoration of Original Place Names

- The approved changes involve replacing anglicized spellings with forms that more accurately reflect Odia pronunciation and linguistic traditions.
- Examples include:



- **Cuttack → Kataka**
- **Balasore → Baleswar**
- **Sambalpur → Sambalapura**
- Several other districts, towns, and administrative units have also undergone spelling corrections.
- The revised names will be adopted in:
 - Government records.
 - Official notifications.
 - Educational materials.
 - Public signboards.
 - Digital databases and maps.

Why Was the Change Needed?

- Many place names were altered during colonial administration for ease of English pronunciation.
- These spellings often deviated from:
 - Original Odia phonetics.
 - Historical nomenclature.
 - Cultural and linguistic traditions.
- The restoration aims to:
 - Preserve linguistic heritage.
 - Strengthen regional identity.
 - Promote correct pronunciation of place names.
 - Reflect indigenous historical and cultural continuity.

Additional Info

Odia as a Classical Language

- **Odia** was accorded **Classical Language** status by the Government of India in **2014**.
- Criteria for Classical Language status include:
 - High antiquity of early texts.
 - Rich and original literary tradition.
 - Distinct linguistic heritage.

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 29:** Protects the cultural and linguistic interests of citizens.
- **Article 350A:** Provides for facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education.
- **Eighth Schedule:** Recognizes India's officially listed languages, including **Odia**.

Odisha Announces Free Education from KG to PG

What's the News?

- The **Odisha Government** has announced **free education from Kindergarten (KG) to Postgraduate (PG) level** in all government educational institutions across the state.
- The announcement was made by Chief Minister **Mohan Charan Majhi** as part of the government's efforts to make

education **free, universal, and inclusive.**

- The policy will cover institutions under both the **School & Mass Education Department** and the **Higher Education Department**.
- The initiative is expected to significantly reduce financial barriers to education, particularly for **economically weaker sections, girls, and students from disadvantaged communities.**

Free Education from KG to PG

- Free education will be provided in:
 - Government schools
 - Government colleges
 - Government higher educational institutions
- Covers the entire educational journey from:
 - Kindergarten (Pre-primary)
 - Primary and Secondary Education
 - Higher Secondary Education
 - Undergraduate Education
 - Postgraduate Education
- Aims to ensure that no student discontinues education due to financial constraints.

Education Reforms in Odisha

School Education Initiatives

- Expansion of **Shishu Vatika** (pre-primary education) under the framework of **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.
- Construction of **Godabarish Mishra Model Primary Schools** across Gram Panchayat headquarters to strengthen foundational learning.
- Free textbooks for students up to Class X.
- Recruitment of large numbers of teachers to address vacancies and improve learning outcomes.

Higher Education Focus

- Removal of tuition-related barriers for college and university students.
- Promotion of inclusive access to undergraduate and postgraduate education.
- Strengthening human capital development and workforce readiness.

Additional Info

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

- Replaces the **National Policy on Education, 1986**.
- Emphasizes:
 - Universal access to education.
 - Foundational literacy and numeracy.
 - Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).



- Multidisciplinary higher education.
- Increased **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** in higher education to **50%** by 2035.

Article 21A of the Constitution

- Inserted by the **86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002**.
- Provides **Right to Education** for children aged **6–14 years**.

Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009

- Operationalizes Article 21A.
- Guarantees free and compulsory elementary education for children aged 6–14 years.
- Prescribes norms relating to:
 - School infrastructure
 - Teacher-student ratio
 - Access and equity in education

Education in the State List and Concurrent List

- Originally a **State Subject**.
- Shifted to the **Concurrent List** through the **42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1976**.
- Both Parliament and State Legislatures can make laws on education.

Odisha Approves ₹76,612 Crore Investments; Enters Lab-Grown Diamond Sector

What's the News?

The Odisha government has approved **20 major investment proposals worth ₹76,612 crore**, expected to generate substantial employment and boost industrial growth in the state. The approved projects span sectors such as **green energy, power and renewable energy, chemicals, steel, textiles, food processing, logistics, and advanced manufacturing**. Notably, Odisha has also approved its first major investment in the **lab-grown diamond sector**, marking diversification into high-value manufacturing.

Investment Proposals

- Total investment approved: **₹76,612 crore**.
- Number of projects: **20**.
- Expected employment generation: **over 46,000 jobs**.
- Investments spread across multiple districts of Odisha.
- Focus on sustainable industrialization and value-added manufacturing.

Major Sectors

- Green Energy and Renewable Energy
- Power Generation and Transmission
- Chemicals and Petrochemicals

- Steel and Metal Industries
- Textiles and Apparel
- Food Processing
- Logistics and Infrastructure
- Advanced Manufacturing

What are Lab-Grown Diamonds?

- Diamonds produced in controlled laboratory environments using advanced technology.
- Chemically, physically, and optically identical to natural diamonds.
- Manufactured primarily through:
 - High Pressure High Temperature (HPHT) Method
 - Chemical Vapour Deposition (CVD) Method

Delhi Announces 20% Reservation for Ex-Agniveers in Government Jobs

What's the News?

The Delhi Government has announced **20% reservation for Ex-Agniveers** in direct recruitment to selected **Group 'C' government posts**. The decision was reviewed by Delhi Lieutenant Governor **Taranjit Singh Sandhu**, with departments directed to amend recruitment rules and complete implementation procedures. The move aims to facilitate the transition of former Agniveers into civilian employment by utilizing their military training, discipline, and skills.

20% Reservation for Ex-Agniveers Covered Posts

The reservation will apply to direct recruitment in the following Group 'C' posts:

- Police Constables
- Firemen
- Jail Warders
- Forest Guards
- Wildlife Guards

Departments have been directed to modify recruitment rules to operationalize the quota.

Objectives

- Provide post-service employment opportunities to Ex-Agniveers.
- Utilize trained and disciplined manpower in public services.
- Strengthen security and emergency-response departments.
- Support the long-term success of the Agnipath recruitment model.

Agnipath Scheme

Overview

The **Agnipath Scheme** was launched in **2022** for recruitment of youth into the:



- Indian Army
- Indian Navy
- Indian Air Force

Selected recruits are known as **Agniveers**.

Features

- Age eligibility: 17.5–21 years (with periodic relaxations).
- Service tenure: 4 years.
- Up to 25% of Agniveers may be retained in regular service based on merit and organizational requirements.
- Remaining personnel exit with a **Seva Nidhi package**, skill certificates, and other benefits.

Purpose

- Create a youthful military profile.
- Reduce long-term pension liabilities.
- Develop a trained and skilled workforce for civilian sectors.

Post-Service Rehabilitation Measures

Existing Support Measures

The Union and State Governments have introduced several measures for Ex-Agniveers:

- Reservation in Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs).
- Reservation in various state government jobs.
- Age relaxations in recruitment.
- Preference in security and disaster-management roles.
- Skill certification and employment facilitation.

Delhi-Specific Measures

The Delhi administration has set a deadline for departments to amend recruitment rules and ensure implementation of the quota across concerned departments.

Additional Info

Group 'C' Posts

- Non-gazetted government posts.
- Typically involve operational, field-level, and support functions.
- Recruitment is generally conducted through direct recruitment examinations and selection processes.

Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs)

Include:

- Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)
- Border Security Force (BSF)
- Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)
- Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)
- Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)

Odisha Gets Development Projects Worth ₹47,600 Crore

What's the News?

President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched and inaugurated development projects worth over **₹47,600 crore** in Odisha. The projects span sectors such as railways, road infrastructure, drinking water, education, power transmission, petroleum, tribal development, and urban services. The initiative is aimed at accelerating economic growth, improving connectivity, generating employment, and supporting Odisha's long-term industrial and social development.

Major Projects Launched

Infrastructure and Connectivity

Key projects focus on strengthening Odisha's transport network through:

- New railway lines and railway infrastructure upgrades.
- National highway and road connectivity projects.
- Logistics and freight movement improvements.
- Urban transportation and public infrastructure development.

Energy and Power

Projects include:

- Power transmission and distribution infrastructure.
- Expansion of energy networks to support industrial growth.
- Measures to improve electricity access and reliability in rural and urban areas.

Water Supply and Urban Development

- Drinking water supply projects under national urban missions.
- Expansion of sanitation and civic infrastructure.
- Strengthening municipal services in growing urban centres.

Focus on Tribal and Social Development

Tribal Welfare

Several initiatives target tribal-dominated districts through:

- Improved educational infrastructure.
- Skill development programmes.
- Better healthcare and basic services.
- Enhanced connectivity to remote regions.

Education Sector

Projects include:

- New educational institutions and infrastructure.
- Expansion of higher education facilities.



- Improved access to quality education for rural and tribal communities.

Importance for Odisha

Strategic Advantages

Odisha possesses:

- Rich mineral resources.
- Major ports on the eastern coast.
- Strong industrial potential in steel, aluminium, petrochemicals, and manufacturing.
- Growing renewable energy opportunities.

The newly launched projects seek to leverage these advantages and strengthen Odisha's role as a major economic growth centre in eastern India.

Additional Info

PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan

- Launched in 2021.
- Integrated infrastructure planning platform.
- Aims to improve multimodal connectivity.
- Reduces logistics costs and project delays.

PM Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN)

- Focuses on Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).
- Provides:
 - Housing
 - Roads
 - Drinking Water
 - Education
 - Healthcare
 - Telecommunications

Ladakh Enforces Complete Ban on Identified Single-Use Plastics

What's the News?

The Union Territory of Ladakh has imposed a complete ban on identified single-use plastic (SUP) items and introduced stringent penalties for violations. The decision aims to protect the fragile Himalayan ecosystem, reduce plastic pollution, and promote sustainable waste management practices. Authorities have directed government departments, businesses, institutions, and the public to ensure strict compliance with the ban.

Single-Use Plastic Ban

The ban covers identified single-use plastic items that are commonly discarded after one use, including:

- Plastic cutlery (spoons, forks, knives).
- Plastic plates, cups, and glasses.
- Plastic straws and stirrers.
- Plastic banners and decorative items.

- Certain plastic packaging materials and disposable products.

Penalties for Violations

A graded penalty system has been introduced:

Offence	Penalty
First Violation	₹10,000
Repeated Violations	Higher penalties and enforcement action

Authorities have also empowered local agencies to conduct inspections and impose penalties on violators.

Why Ladakh Took This Step

Fragile Himalayan Ecosystem

Ladakh's environment is particularly vulnerable because:

- Low temperatures slow the decomposition of waste.
- High-altitude ecosystems have limited carrying capacity.
- Tourism generates substantial plastic waste.
- Waste transportation and disposal remain challenging in remote areas.

Growing Plastic Pollution

The increasing use of disposable plastic products has led to:

- Littering in tourist destinations.
- Pollution of water bodies and mountain landscapes.
- Threats to wildlife and grazing lands.
- Increased burden on local waste management systems.

Implementation Mechanism

Enforcement Agencies

The implementation involves:

- District administrations.
- Urban Local Bodies.
- Pollution Control authorities.
- Tourism and local governance institutions.

Awareness Measures

Authorities have emphasized:

- Public awareness campaigns.
- Promotion of sustainable alternatives.
- Participation of educational institutions and local communities.

Additional Info

Single-Use Plastic (SUP)

Single-use plastics are items designed to be used only once before disposal.

Examples:

- Plastic bags
- Straws
- Cutlery
- Cups and plates
- Packaging films
- Stirrers

**National Ban on Single-Use Plastics**

India prohibited the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale, and use of identified single-use plastic items from **1 July 2022**.

Implementing Ministry

- **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**

Legal Basis

- **Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016**
- Amendments issued under the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**

Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016**Key provisions:**

- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).
- Segregation and collection of plastic waste.
- Responsibilities for producers, importers, and brand owners.
- Promotion of recycling and environmentally sound disposal.

About Ladakh

- Became a Union Territory in 2019.
- Administrative Headquarters:
 - Summer: Leh
 - Winter: Kargil
- Known for:
 - Cold desert ecosystem.
 - High-altitude wetlands.
 - Glaciers and mountain biodiversity.

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Delhi-Specific Measures

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Additional Info**Group 'C' Posts**

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- Typically involve operational, field-level, and support functions.



- Recruitment is generally conducted through direct recruitment examinations and selection processes.

Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs)

Include:

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- Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)
- Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)
- Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)

Odisha Launches GO-EAST Platform to Accelerate Industrial Growth

What's the News?

The Odisha Government has launched the **GO-EAST (Government of Odisha - Eastern Investment Accelerator & Special Taskforce)** platform to accelerate industrialisation, attract investments from Eastern and North-Eastern India, and promote balanced regional development. Alongside the initiative, the State has announced key amendments to the **Industrial Policy Resolution (IPR), 2022** to provide enhanced incentives for industries in economically backward districts.

GO-EAST Platform

Overview

- A dedicated investment facilitation framework under Odisha's **Single Window System**.
- Aims to position Odisha as the preferred industrial destination in Eastern India.
- Focuses on:
 - Fast-tracking investments.
 - Providing investor handholding.
 - Speedy regulatory approvals.
 - Structured resolution of project-related issues.

Features

- Priority facilitation** for strategic investment proposals.
- Dedicated relationship managers** for investors.
- Time-bound approvals** through the Single Window System.
- Inter-departmental coordination** for faster project implementation.
- Special emphasis on attracting investments from **Eastern and North-Eastern States**.

Amendments to Industrial Policy Resolution (IPR), 2022

Major Changes

- Enhanced incentives extended to **non-mineral-based industries** in **15 economically backward districts**.
- These districts will receive '**Thrust Sector**' benefits to encourage industrial diversification.
- Objective is to reduce regional disparities and promote manufacturing beyond mining-dependent regions.

Targeted Sectors

- Steel and aluminium.
- Chemicals and petrochemicals (especially around the Paradip industrial hub).
- Electronics and semiconductors.
- Green manufacturing.
- Food processing and other value-added industries.

Additional Info

- Industrial Policy Resolution (IPR), 2022**
 - Odisha's flagship industrial policy.
 - Provides fiscal and non-fiscal incentives for industrial investments.
 - Focuses on MSMEs, large industries, exports, innovation, and employment generation.
- Ease of Doing Business Reforms**
 - Odisha has significantly reduced industrial approval timelines through **Deregulation 1.0** and **Deregulation 2.0**.
 - The State aims to reduce approval timelines to **less than 100 days**.
- Industrial Development Priorities**
 - Development of the **Paradip** industrial hub for steel, aluminium, chemicals, and petrochemicals.
 - Promotion of electronics, semiconductor manufacturing, and advanced manufacturing clusters.
 - Industrialisation of border and backward districts to achieve inclusive growth.

Defence

Divyastra Mk-1: Indigenous Loitering Munition Successfully Demonstrated by Indian Army

What's the News?

- The **Indian Army** successfully conducted an operational demonstration of **Divyastra Mk-1**, an indigenous tactical loitering munition developed by **Hoverit**, a defence technology startup based in Lucknow.
- The trials validated the system's capabilities in **Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR)** missions, precision strikes, rapid deployment, and autonomous operations under harsh field conditions.
- The development marks a significant step towards **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** and indigenous defence manufacturing.

Divyastra Mk-1

- **Divyastra Mk-1** is an AI-enabled tactical loitering munition designed for:
 - Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (**ISR**).
 - Precision strike missions.
 - Target tracking.
 - Decoy and swarm operations.
- It combines the capabilities of a drone and a precision-guided weapon by locating, tracking, and striking targets autonomously.

Features

- **Operational Range:** Up to **500 km**.
- **Endurance:** Up to **5-5.5 hours**.
- **Attack Speed:** Around **300-400 km/h**.
- **Payload Capacity:** Up to **15 kg**.
- **Indigenous Content:** Approximately **95%**.
- **Launch Platform:** Vehicle-mounted mobile launcher.
- **Operational Capability:** Desert operations in temperatures exceeding **50°C**.

What is a Loitering Munition?

- A **Loitering Munition (LM)** is an unmanned weapon system that:
 - Flies over a designated area ("loiters").
 - Searches for targets using onboard sensors.
 - Strikes the target once identified.
- It combines the functions of:
 - Surveillance drones.
 - Precision-guided missiles.

Advantages

- Real-time target acquisition.

- High strike accuracy.
- Reduced collateral damage.
- Lower operational cost compared to conventional missiles.
- Capability to engage time-sensitive targets.

AI and Swarm Capabilities

- Equipped with advanced AI-based systems for:
 - Autonomous navigation.
 - Target recognition.
 - Mission planning.
 - Coordinated swarm operations.
- Swarm capability enables multiple drones to:
 - Share battlefield information.
 - Saturate enemy air defences.
 - Conduct coordinated attacks.

Significance for India

Defence Modernisation

- Enhances long-range precision strike capability.
- Strengthens tactical battlefield intelligence gathering.
- Supports network-centric warfare concepts.

Aatmanirbhar Bharat in Defence

- Reduces dependence on imported loitering munitions.
- Promotes indigenous defence startups and innovation.
- Expected to be significantly cheaper than comparable foreign systems.

Strategic Importance

- Useful in contested border regions.
- Enhances deep-strike capabilities without risking pilots.
- Improves rapid-response options against high-value targets.

Additional Info

Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR)

- Refers to integrated military activities used to:
 - Collect information.
 - Monitor adversary movements.
 - Support operational decision-making.
- ISR assets include:
 - Satellites.
 - Drones.
 - Radar systems.
 - Electronic intelligence platforms.

Defence Innovation Initiatives

Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)

- Flagship initiative of the **Ministry of Defence**.

- Supports startups, MSMEs, innovators, and academia in developing indigenous defence technologies.

Aatmanirbhar Bharat in Defence

- Focuses on:
 - Indigenous design and manufacturing.
 - Defence exports.
 - Reduction of import dependence.
 - Technology self-reliance.

Hoverit

- Indian defence technology startup specializing in:
 - Unmanned aerial systems.
 - Tactical drones.
 - Loitering munitions.
 - Autonomous warfare platforms.

Indian Navy to Induct Five Indigenous Naval Platforms to Strengthen Blue-Water Capabilities

What's the News?

- The **Indian Navy** is set to induct **five indigenously built naval platforms**, significantly enhancing its maritime capabilities and operational reach.
- The induction reflects India's growing emphasis on **self-reliance in defence manufacturing** under the **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** initiative.
- These platforms are expected to strengthen India's presence across the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** and improve its ability to undertake long-range maritime operations.

What are Blue-Water Capabilities?

- A **Blue-Water Navy** refers to a naval force capable of sustained operations across deep oceans far from its home ports.
- Key characteristics:
 - Long-range deployment capability.
 - Power projection beyond territorial waters.
 - Protection of sea lanes of communication (SLOCs).
 - Ability to undertake humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and expeditionary missions.

Significance of the New Indigenous Platforms

- Enhances:
 - Maritime surveillance.
 - Anti-submarine warfare capabilities.
 - Surface warfare operations.
 - Logistics and fleet support.

- Improves India's capacity to:
 - Secure critical trade routes.
 - Protect maritime interests in the Indo-Pacific.
 - Respond to regional security challenges.

- Reduces dependence on foreign defence imports.

Boost to Defence Indigenisation

- The vessels have been constructed by Indian shipyards using a high proportion of indigenous components.
- Supports:
 - Domestic shipbuilding ecosystem.
 - Indigenous defence technology development.
 - Employment generation in the defence manufacturing sector.
- Contributes to the goal of making India a major defence production hub.

Additional Info

Aatmanirbhar Bharat in Defence

- Focuses on:
 - Indigenous design, development and manufacturing.
 - Reduction of defence imports.
 - Promotion of private-sector participation.
- Key initiatives:
 - Positive Indigenisation Lists.
 - Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX).
 - Defence Industrial Corridors.

Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

- Strategic maritime region connecting:
 - Asia
 - Africa
 - Australia
- Carries a major portion of global:
 - Oil shipments.
 - Container traffic.
 - International trade.

Key Naval Commands

- **Western Naval Command** – Mumbai
- **Eastern Naval Command** – Visakhapatnam
- **Southern Naval Command** – Kochi

Important Maritime Initiatives

- **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)**
 - India's vision for regional maritime cooperation and security.
- **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)**
 - Promotes a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific.

India Ranks Fifth in Global Military Spending, Second in Arms Imports: SIPRI

What's the News?

- According to the latest report by the **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)**, India remained the **world's fifth-largest military spender** and the **second-largest arms importer** globally.
- India's defence expenditure reached approximately **US\$ 92 billion**, significantly higher than that of neighbouring Pakistan.
- The report highlights continuing modernization of India's armed forces amid evolving regional security challenges and geopolitical uncertainties.

SIPRI Findings on Military Spending

- Global military expenditure reached a record high, reflecting rising geopolitical tensions and security concerns worldwide.
- India accounted for a substantial share of global defence spending with an expenditure of about **US\$ 92 billion**.
- The countries ranking above India in military spending were:
 - United States**
 - China**
 - Russia**
 - Germany**
- India's defence spending increased due to:
 - Military modernization programmes.
 - Enhanced border security requirements.
 - Procurement of advanced defence platforms and technologies.
 - Investments in indigenous defence manufacturing.

Key Data

- India's Military Spending:** ~US\$ 92 billion.
- Global Rank:** 5th largest military spender.
- Arms Import Rank:** 2nd largest importer globally.

Additional Info

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

- An independent international research institute based in:
 - Stockholm, Sweden.**
- Established in:
 - 1966.**
- Focus Areas:

- Military expenditure.
- Arms transfers.
- Arms control.
- Conflict and peace studies.
- International security.

India's Defence Indigenisation Initiatives

- Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**
 - Promotes domestic defence production.
 - Encourages technology transfer and innovation.
- Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP)**
 - Prioritises procurement from domestic manufacturers.
- Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)**
 - Supports startups and MSMEs in defence innovation.
- Positive Indigenisation Lists**
 - Restrict import of specified defence equipment.
 - Encourage indigenous development and production.

India's Nuclear Arsenal Reaches 190 Warheads: SIPRI

What's the News?

- The latest **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Yearbook 2026** estimates that **India's nuclear arsenal has expanded to around 190 warheads**, up from previous estimates.
- India continues to modernize its nuclear forces through the development of advanced delivery systems and improvements in its nuclear command-and-control capabilities.
- The report notes that India maintains a larger nuclear stockpile than Pakistan and continues to strengthen its strategic deterrence posture amid regional security challenges.

Global Nuclear Landscape

- Countries possessing nuclear weapons:
 - United States
 - Russia
 - China
 - France
 - United Kingdom
 - India
 - Pakistan
 - North Korea
 - Israel
- The majority of global nuclear weapons continue to be held by:
 - Russia**
 - United States**



Nuclear Triad

India possesses an operational **Nuclear Triad**, enabling nuclear weapon delivery through:

- **Land-based missiles:** Agni series ballistic missiles.
- **Air-based platforms:** Nuclear-capable fighter aircraft.
- **Sea-based platforms:** Ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs).

The triad enhances the credibility of India's second-strike capability.

India's Nuclear Doctrine

Core Principles

- **No First Use (NFU):** Nuclear weapons will be used only in retaliation to a nuclear attack.
- **Credible Minimum Deterrence:** Maintaining a nuclear arsenal sufficient to deter adversaries rather than pursuing numerical superiority.
- **Massive Retaliation:** Any nuclear attack against India would invite punitive retaliation.

DRDO Demonstrates Next-Generation Ballistic Missile Defence and Naval Strike Capabilities

What's the News?

- The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** successfully conducted a series of missile trials demonstrating India's advanced air and missile defence capabilities.
- The tests included:
 - A **multi-layered Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system** interception exercise.
 - Successful trials of the **Naval Anti-Ship Missile-Medium Range (NASM-MR)**.
- The demonstrations validated India's capability to counter both ballistic missile threats and maritime targets, strengthening national security and strategic deterrence.

Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) System

- A **Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD)** system is designed to detect, track, intercept, and destroy incoming

ballistic missiles before they reach their targets.

- It provides a protective shield against missile attacks through multiple interception layers.

NASM-MR (Naval Anti-Ship Missile - Medium Range)

Overview

- **NASM-MR** is an indigenous anti-ship missile developed by **DRDO** for maritime strike missions.
- Designed for deployment from naval platforms and aircraft.

Features

- Medium-range precision strike capability.
- Advanced guidance and navigation systems.
- Capability to engage moving maritime targets.
- High accuracy in complex operational environments.
- Enhanced resistance to electronic countermeasures.

Additional Info

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)

- Established in **1958**.
- Functions under the **Ministry of Defence**.
- Responsible for research and development in:
 - Missiles.
 - Aeronautics.
 - Naval systems.
 - Electronics and communication systems.
 - Combat vehicles and strategic technologies.

Ballistic Missiles

- Missiles that follow a ballistic trajectory after the powered phase of flight.
- Can be categorized as:
 - Short-Range Ballistic Missiles (SRBM).
 - Medium-Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBM).
 - Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBM).
 - Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM).

DRDO Successfully Tests Long-Range Land Attack Cruise Missile

What's the News?

India successfully conducted the flight-test of its indigenously developed **Long-Range Land Attack Cruise Missile (LRLACM)** from **Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island** off the Odisha coast. Developed by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**, the missile met all mission objectives and demonstrated India's growing capability in long-range precision strike systems. The test was monitored through tracking systems deployed by the **Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur**.

Long-Range Land Attack Cruise Missile (LRLACM)

Features

- Indigenous long-range cruise missile developed by DRDO.
- Designed for **precision strikes against strategic land targets**.
- Capable of flying at low altitudes to evade enemy radar detection.
- Suitable for deployment by multiple armed forces platforms.
- Equipped with advanced navigation and guidance systems for high accuracy.

Development

- Developed with contributions from multiple DRDO laboratories and Indian industry partners.
- **Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE), Bengaluru** serves as the nodal laboratory.
- The test was witnessed by representatives of the **Indian Navy** and **Indian Air Force**, indicating potential tri-service utility.

Cruise Missile vs Ballistic Missile

Feature	Cruise Missile	Ballistic Missile
Flight Path	Guided throughout flight	Follows a ballistic trajectory after boost phase
Altitude	Low altitude	High altitude
Maneuverability	High	Limited
Detection	Difficult due to terrain-hugging flight	Easier to track during flight
Primary Role	Precision strike	Strategic deterrence and heavy payload delivery

India's Indigenous Missile Ecosystem

Major Cruise Missiles

- **BrahMos** – Supersonic cruise missile developed jointly by India and Russia.
- **Nirbhay** – Long-range subsonic cruise missile programme.
- **LRLACM** – Indigenous next-generation land attack cruise missile.

Major Ballistic Missiles

- **Agni Series** – Strategic ballistic missiles.
- **Prithvi Series** – Surface-to-surface ballistic missiles.
- **Pralay** – Conventional tactical ballistic missile.

Additional Info

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)

- Established: **1958**
- Ministry: Ministry of Defence
- Headquarters: New Delhi
- Mandate:
 - Defence technologies research and development.
 - Missile systems.
 - Electronic warfare systems.
 - Combat vehicles and aerospace technologies.

Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur

- Located in **Balasore district, Odisha**.
- Premier missile testing facility of DRDO.
- Supports testing of:
 - Ballistic missiles
 - Cruise missiles
 - Air defence systems
 - Naval missile systems

Cruise Missile

- A guided missile that remains powered throughout most of its flight.
- Designed for high-precision attacks against land or sea targets.
- Can carry conventional or strategic payloads.

Indian Army Clears Indigenous Production of Mepro X6 Sights for Negev Machine Guns

What's the News?

The Indian Army has approved the **Mepro X6 telescopic sight** as the dedicated daytime sighting system for its in-service **Negev Light Machine Guns (LMGs)**. Following successful evaluations, indigenous production of the sight will be undertaken in India by **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)** through technology transfer and local manufacturing arrangements. The move strengthens combat effectiveness while advancing defence indigenisation under the **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** initiative.

Mepro X6 Telescopic Sight

What is Mepro X6?

- A high-performance optical sight designed for machine guns and infantry weapons.
- Provides enhanced target acquisition and engagement capability during daytime operations.
- Specifically selected for integration with the Army's Negev LMG fleet.

Features

- Fixed magnification optical system.
- Improved accuracy and target identification.
- Rugged design suitable for harsh battlefield conditions.
- Enhanced situational awareness for infantry soldiers.
- Designed to withstand recoil and adverse environmental conditions.

Integration with Negev Light Machine Gun

About the Negev LMG

- Manufactured by Israel Weapon Industries (IWI).
- Chambered in:
 - 5.56×45 mm NATO
 - 7.62×51 mm NATO variants
- Used for infantry fire support and suppression roles.

Operational Benefits

- Improves first-round hit probability.
- Enables accurate engagement at longer ranges.
- Enhances effectiveness during counter-insurgency and conventional operations.
- Increases lethality and battlefield survivability of infantry units.

Indigenous Production by BEL

Role of Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)

- Selected to lead indigenous manufacturing of the Mepro X6 sight.
- Production will support:

- Technology absorption.
- Local supply chains.
- Reduced dependence on imports.
- Lifecycle maintenance within India.

Significance

- Strengthens India's defence manufacturing ecosystem.
- Promotes self-reliance in critical soldier systems.
- Supports long-term sustainment and modernization of infantry equipment.

Additional Info

Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)

- Established: **1954**
- Ministry: Ministry of Defence
- Headquarters: Bengaluru
- Navratna Defence PSU.
- Major products:
 - Radars
 - Electronic warfare systems
 - Communication systems
 - Electro-optical devices
 - Missile support systems

Light Machine Gun (LMG)

- Automatic weapon providing sustained suppressive fire.
- Operated by infantry sections and platoons.
- Bridges the gap between assault rifles and medium machine guns.

Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020

Key objectives:

- Promote indigenous procurement.
- Encourage domestic design and development.
- Simplify defence acquisition processes.
- Increase participation of Indian industry.

Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)

- Launched by the Ministry of Defence.
- Supports startups, MSMEs, innovators, and academia in developing defence technologies.

India's Defence Production Reaches Record ₹1.78 Lakh Crore

What's the News?

India's annual defence production has reached an all-time high of **₹1.78 lakh crore in FY 2025-26**, marking a major milestone in the country's push for defence self-reliance. Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** credited policy reforms, growing private-sector participation, and the government's **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** initiative for the achievement.

Defence exports also touched a record level, reflecting India's growing position in the global defence manufacturing ecosystem.

Record Defence Production

- Defence production reached **₹1.78 lakh crore**, registering **15.6% growth** over the previous year's output of ₹1.54 lakh crore.
- Production has increased by **110% since FY 2020-21** (₹84,643 crore).
- Indigenous defence production has grown nearly **fourfold** from ₹43,746 crore in FY 2013-14.

Sector-wise Contribution

Sector	Share in Production
Defence PSUs & Other PSUs	~76%
Private Sector	~24%

- Private-sector contribution reached an all-time high of around **₹42,000 crore**, up from 22% in the previous fiscal year.

Defence Exports Surge

- India recorded **defence exports worth ₹38,424 crore** in FY 2025-26.
- Exports have become a key driver of growth for the domestic defence industry.
- Rising global demand for indigenous platforms, missiles, aerospace systems, and defence equipment has strengthened India's export footprint.

Drivers of Growth

Policy Reforms

- Simplification of defence procurement procedures.
- Positive Indigenisation Lists restricting imports of selected defence items.
- Liberalisation of FDI norms in defence manufacturing.
- Increased focus on domestic procurement under the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP).

Private Sector Participation

- Growing involvement of private firms and defence startups.
- Expansion in emerging technologies such as drones, AI-enabled systems, and advanced electronics.
- Increased collaboration between industry, DRDO, and the armed forces.

Future Targets

The Government has set ambitious goals for the defence sector by 2029:

Indicator	Target
Defence Manufacturing	₹3 lakh crore
Defence Exports	₹50,000 crore

These targets aim to establish India among the leading global defence manufacturing nations.

Additional Info

Department of Defence Production (DDP)

- Functions under the Ministry of Defence.
- Responsible for promoting indigenous production of defence equipment.
- Oversees Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) and Ordnance manufacturing entities.

Initiatives Promoting Indigenous Defence Manufacturing

- Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**
- Make in India**
- Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)**
- Defence Industrial Corridors**
 - Uttar Pradesh Defence Corridor
 - Tamil Nadu Defence Corridor
- Positive Indigenisation Lists**
- SRIJAN Portal** for import substitution

Exercise Pitch Black 2026: IAF to Participate in Major Multinational Air Combat Drill

What's the News?

The **Indian Air Force (IAF)** will participate in **Exercise Pitch Black 2026**, a premier multinational air warfare exercise hosted by the **Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF)** in Australia's Northern Territory. The exercise will bring together over 100 aircraft and personnel from around 20 countries to conduct complex combat-oriented air operations and enhance interoperability among participating air forces.

Exercise Pitch Black

Overview

- Exercise Pitch Black is a **biennial (every two years)** multinational air combat exercise hosted by the RAAF.
- It is conducted primarily from:
 - RAAF Base Darwin**
 - RAAF Base Tindal**
- The exercise focuses on:
 - Large Force Employment (LFE) missions
 - Air combat integration
 - Offensive and defensive air operations
 - Interoperability among partner nations
 - Night-flying operations in realistic combat environments.

Pitch Black 2026

- Scheduled from **20 July to 7 August 2026**.



- Participation of:
 - More than **100 aircraft**
 - Thousands of military personnel
 - Around **20 nations** from the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and North America.
- Conducted across one of the world's largest military training areas, enabling realistic combat simulations.

Australia-India Defence Cooperation

Pitch Black forms part of the expanding defence partnership between India and Australia, which includes:

- Bilateral military exercises
- Maritime cooperation
- Intelligence sharing
- Defence technology collaboration
- Cooperation under the Indo-Pacific strategic framework

The exercise complements broader initiatives under the **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)** between the two countries.

History of Exercise Pitch Black

- First conducted in **1981**.
- International participation began in **1983**.
- Held biennially since **1988** (except certain years and the COVID-19 interruption in 2020).
- Named "Pitch Black" due to its original emphasis on **night-time flying operations** over sparsely populated regions of Northern Australia.

Additional Info

Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF)

- Established: 1921
- Headquarters: Canberra, Australia
- It is Australia's principal aerial warfare branch.

Other Major Multinational Air Exercises Involving India

- **Exercise Tarang Shakti** (India)
- **Exercise Garuda** (India-France)
- **Exercise Cope India** (India-USA)
- **Exercise Indra Dhanush** (India-UK)
- **Exercise Desert Flag** (UAE-led multinational exercise)

Indian Coast Guard Inducts First Indigenous Hovercraft H-561

What's the News?

The **Indian Coast Guard (ICG)** has inducted **H-561**, India's first indigenously constructed **Air Cushion Vehicle (ACV)/Hovercraft**, into service in Goa. The hovercraft is the first of six such vessels being built by **Chowgule & Company Pvt. Ltd.** under a Ministry of Defence contract. The induction marks a

significant milestone in India's maritime self-reliance and strengthens the Coast Guard's operational capabilities.

H-561 Air Cushion Vehicle

H-561 is the first indigenous hovercraft developed for the Indian Coast Guard under the **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** initiative. It is designed to operate effectively in shallow waters, marshes, mudflats, creeks, and coastal regions where conventional vessels face limitations.

Features

- Indigenous Air Cushion Vehicle (ACV).
- High-speed maritime response platform.
- Ability to operate over land, water, mudflats, and marshy terrain.
- Enhanced mobility in shallow coastal zones.
- Suitable for rapid deployment and interdiction operations.
- First of six hovercraft planned for the ICG fleet.

Builder

- Constructed by **Chowgule & Company Pvt. Ltd.** in Goa.
- Developed under a Ministry of Defence contract for six Air Cushion Vehicles.

Air Cushion Vehicle (Hovercraft)

What is an Air Cushion Vehicle?

An Air Cushion Vehicle (ACV), commonly known as a hovercraft, travels on a cushion of pressurized air created beneath the craft.

Advantages

- Operates on both land and water.
- Can navigate shallow waters.
- Suitable for marshes, sandbanks, and mudflats.
- High-speed deployment during emergencies.
- Useful for amphibious and coastal operations.

Applications

- Coastal security.
- Border surveillance.
- Search and rescue.
- Disaster relief.
- Environmental response operations.

Indian Coast Guard (ICG)

About

- Established in **1978**.
- Functions under the **Ministry of Defence**.
- Maritime law enforcement agency of India.

Functions

- Protection of maritime zones.
- Coastal security.
- Anti-smuggling operations.
- Search and rescue missions.



- Marine environment protection.
- Assistance to fishermen at sea.

Motto

"Vayam Rakshamah" (We Protect).

Three Indigenous Warships Join Indian Navy Fleet

What's the News?

India has commissioned three indigenously built naval platforms into the Indian Navy, marking a significant step in strengthening maritime security and advancing the country's self-reliance goals in defence manufacturing. The induction includes a stealth frigate, a survey vessel, and a missile-equipped warship, reflecting India's growing capability to design and construct sophisticated naval assets domestically. The move enhances the Navy's operational reach across the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and supports India's vision of becoming a major maritime power.

New Naval Platforms**INS Agray**

- Indigenous guided missile warship built under the Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC) programme.
- Designed for coastal defence and anti-submarine operations.
- Equipped with advanced sonar systems, torpedoes, and anti-submarine weapons.

Significance

- Strengthens India's near-shore anti-submarine warfare capabilities.
- Enhances surveillance and protection of maritime assets.

INS Dunagiri

- Modern stealth frigate built under Project 17A.
- Features advanced stealth technology, integrated platform management systems, and network-centric warfare capabilities.
- Designed for multi-dimensional operations including air, surface, and sub-surface warfare.

Features

- Reduced radar signature.
- Advanced missile and weapon systems.
- Indigenous sensors and combat management systems.

INS Sanshodhak

- Large Survey Vessel (LSV) designed for hydrographic and oceanographic surveys.

- Supports nautical charting, seabed mapping, and maritime navigation.

Importance

- Enhances India's hydrographic capabilities.
- Supports safe navigation, maritime infrastructure development, and strategic naval operations.

Importance for Maritime Security**Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**

The new platforms improve India's ability to:

- Monitor critical Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs).
- Counter submarine threats.
- Conduct maritime surveillance.
- Support humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations.

Blue-Water Navy Aspirations

The induction contributes to India's objective of maintaining a capable blue-water navy capable of operating across distant maritime zones and safeguarding national interests.

Additional Info**Project 17A**

- Follow-on programme to Project 17 (Shivalik-class frigates).
- Total of **seven stealth frigates** under construction.
- Built by:
 - Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited
 - Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers
- Incorporates advanced stealth and automation technologies.

Indian Navy**Role**

- Maritime arm of the Armed Forces of India.
- Responsible for safeguarding India's maritime interests.

Motto

- "**Sham No Varunah**" (May the Lord of the Oceans be Auspicious unto Us).

SAGAR Doctrine**SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)**

Key objectives:

- Maritime cooperation.
- Regional security.
- Disaster response.
- Sustainable development of the Indian Ocean Region.

HELINA Missile: India's Indigenous Helicopter-Launched Anti-Tank Guided Missile

What's the News?

India's **HELINA (Helicopter-Launched Nag)** missile has emerged as a major milestone in the country's defence indigenisation efforts. Developed by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**, HELINA—now officially named **Dhruvastra**—is an indigenous, third-generation, fire-and-forget anti-tank guided missile designed for attack helicopters. The missile is induction-ready and strengthens India's anti-armour warfare capability while advancing the goal of **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** in defence.

HELINA (Dhruvastra)

- HELINA is the helicopter-launched variant of the **Nag Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM)**.
- It is designed to destroy:
 - Main Battle Tanks (MBTs)
 - Armoured vehicles
 - Fortified positions
- The missile employs **fire-and-forget** technology, allowing the launching helicopter to disengage immediately after firing.

Features

- **Developer:** DRDO
- **Manufacturer:** Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL)
- **Type:** Third-generation Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM)
- **Launch Platform:**
 - HAL Rudra (ALH Weapon System Integrated)
 - HAL Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) Prachand
- **Range:** Around **7–10 km** (depending on launch profile)
- **Guidance:**
 - Imaging Infrared (IIR) Seeker
 - Lock-on Before Launch (LOBL)
- **Attack Mode:** Top-attack capability for striking the weaker upper armour of tanks.
- **Warhead:** Tandem High-Explosive Anti-Tank (HEAT) warhead capable of defeating Explosive Reactive Armour (ERA).

Nag Missile Family

Missile	Launch Platform	Role
Nag	Land-based NAMICA	Anti-tank missile
HELINA (Dhruvastra)	Helicopters	Helicopter-launched ATGM
SANT	Helicopters	Stand-off Anti-Tank Missile with extended range

Additional Info

- **DRDO**
 - Ministry: Ministry of Defence
 - Established: **1958**
 - Headquarters: New Delhi
 - Motto: *Balasya Mulam Vigyanam* ("Strength's Origin is in Science")
- **Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL)**
 - Defence Public Sector Undertaking (DPSU)
 - Primary manufacturer of several indigenous missile systems.

DFP-2026: New Financial Powers Framework to Accelerate DRDO's Defence R&D

What's the News?

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has launched the **Delegation of Financial Powers to DRDO (DFP-2026)**, a revised financial framework aimed at enhancing the **efficiency, accountability, and**

timely execution of strategic defence R&D projects. The reform grants greater financial autonomy within the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), enabling faster approvals, smoother project execution, and quicker induction of indigenous defence technologies into the Armed Forces.

DFP-2026

- **DFP-2026** is the revised framework governing the delegation of financial powers within **DRDO** and the **Department of Defence R&D**.
- It decentralises financial decision-making to reduce procedural delays in defence research and development.
- The framework aligns with the **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** vision by strengthening indigenous defence technology development.

Features

- Provides **dedicated financial provisions** for:
 - Trial campaigns.
 - Testing and evaluation activities.
- Authorises **pre-project R&D initiatives**, allowing exploratory research before formal project approval.
- Clearly separates financial powers for grants related to:
 - Extra-Mural Research (EMR) Projects.
 - Defence Innovation Accelerator – Centres of Excellence (DIA-CoEs).
 - Technology Development Fund (TDF) projects.
- Enhances financial delegation at multiple organisational levels to improve operational efficiency.

About DRDO

- **Established:** 1958.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Defence.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.
- **Administrative Department:** Department of Defence Research & Development.
- **Mandate:**
 - Design and develop strategic defence technologies.
 - Promote indigenous defence manufacturing.
 - Support the Armed Forces through advanced weapon systems and military technologies.

Additional Info

Technology Development Fund (TDF)

- A Ministry of Defence initiative implemented by DRDO.
- Supports:
 - MSMEs.
 - Start-ups.
 - Academic institutions.
- Objective:
 - Develop indigenous defence technologies.

- Reduce import dependence.
- Encourage innovation in defence manufacturing.

Extra-Mural Research (EMR)

- Funds defence-related research in:
 - Universities.
 - IITs.
 - Academic institutions.
 - Research organisations.
- Promotes collaboration between DRDO and academia.

Defence Innovation Accelerator – Centres of Excellence (DIA-CoEs)

- Centres established in leading academic institutions.
- Focus on:
 - Emerging defence technologies.
 - Advanced materials.
 - Artificial Intelligence.
 - Robotics.
 - Quantum technologies.
 - Cyber security.

International Relations

BRICS Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group Meeting Begins in Puri

What's the News?

- India is hosting the **BRICS Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Working Group Meeting** in Puri, Odisha.
- Representatives from all **11 BRICS member countries** are participating in the meeting.
- The discussions focus on strengthening cooperation in disaster risk reduction, climate resilience, early warning systems, and disaster management technologies.
- The meeting is being organized under India's BRICS engagement framework to promote collaborative approaches towards disaster preparedness and resilience.

BRICS Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group Objective

- Enhance cooperation among BRICS countries in:
 - Disaster risk reduction.
 - Disaster preparedness and response.
 - Climate adaptation and resilience.
 - Capacity building and knowledge sharing.

Areas of Discussion

- **Multi-hazard Early Warning Systems**
- **Disaster-resilient Infrastructure**
- **Use of Technology and AI in Disaster Management**
- **Community-based Disaster Risk Reduction**
- **Climate-induced Disaster Risks**
- **Sharing of Best Practices among BRICS nations**

Expected Outcomes

- Strengthening institutional cooperation among member countries.
- Promoting exchange of disaster management expertise.
- Improving regional and global resilience against natural disasters.
- Supporting implementation of international disaster risk reduction frameworks.

India's Role in Disaster Risk Reduction

Leadership in Resilient Infrastructure

- India has emerged as a global advocate for disaster resilience through initiatives such as:
 - **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).**
 - Disaster-resilient urban planning and infrastructure development.
 - Expansion of early warning systems covering cyclones, floods, and extreme weather events.

Technological Initiatives

- Use of:
 - Satellite-based monitoring.
 - GIS-based risk mapping.
 - AI-enabled forecasting systems.
 - Integrated disaster management platforms.

Institutional Framework

- **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)**
- **National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)**
- **State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs)**
- **National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM)**

BRICS

About BRICS

- An intergovernmental grouping of major emerging economies.

Member Countries (11)

- **Brazil**
- **Russia**
- **India**
- **China**
- **South Africa**
- **Egypt**
- **Ethiopia**
- **Iran**
- **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**
- **Saudi Arabia**
- **Indonesia**

Objectives

- Promote economic cooperation.
- Strengthen multilateralism.
- Enhance cooperation in:
 - Trade and investment.
 - Science and technology.
 - Health.
 - Climate action.
 - Disaster risk reduction.

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

What is DRR?

- A systematic approach to identifying, assessing, and reducing disaster risks.
- Focuses on minimizing vulnerabilities and strengthening resilience before disasters occur.

Key Components

- Risk Assessment.
- Prevention and Mitigation.
- Preparedness.
- Response and Recovery.
- Building Back Better.

Global Framework

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030)

- Adopted under the **United Nations** framework.
- Seeks substantial reduction in:
 - Disaster mortality.
 - Economic losses.
 - Damage to critical infrastructure.
- Promotes resilience and preparedness at all levels.

Additional Info

Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)

- Launched by India in **2019**.
- A global partnership aimed at promoting infrastructure resilience against disasters and climate risks.
- Headquarters: **New Delhi**.

National Disaster Management Act, 2005

- Provides the legal and institutional framework for disaster management in India.
- Established:
 - **NDMA**
 - **NDRF**
 - **National Executive Committee (NEC)**

India Seeks Protection from US Section 301 Tariffs During Trade Talks

What's the News?

- India has sought protection from potential tariffs imposed under **Section 301 of the US Trade Act, 1974** as part of ongoing negotiations for a bilateral trade agreement with the United States.
- The issue has emerged as a key point in discussions between the two countries, with India seeking preferential treatment and relief from future tariff actions.

- The demand comes amid ongoing **Section 301 investigations** by the **United States Trade Representative (USTR)** into several trading partners, including India.

What is Section 301?

Overview

- **Section 301** is a provision of the **US Trade Act, 1974**.
- It authorizes the **United States Trade Representative (USTR)** to:
 - Investigate foreign trade practices.
 - Determine whether such practices are unfair, discriminatory, or restrict US commerce.
 - Impose unilateral trade measures, including tariffs and other restrictions.

Powers Under Section 301

- Conduct trade investigations.
- Negotiate removal of alleged unfair practices.
- Impose additional import duties.
- Restrict market access or trade benefits.
- Initiate retaliatory trade actions.

Why is India Concerned

Ongoing US Investigations

- The USTR has initiated Section 301 investigations involving India and other trading partners.
- The investigations cover issues such as:
 - Manufacturing overcapacity.
 - Market access barriers.
 - Labour-related concerns in supply chains.

Potential Tariff Impact

- Section 301 findings can lead to:
 - Additional tariffs on exports.
 - Reduced competitiveness of Indian products in the US market.
 - Higher costs for sectors dependent on US exports.

Competitive Concerns

- India seeks tariff arrangements that remain competitive with regional exporters such as:
 - Bangladesh
 - Pakistan
 - Sri Lanka
- The objective is to prevent erosion of India's export competitiveness in the US market.

India-US Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA)

Current Status

- India and the US are negotiating the first phase of a **Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA)**.

- According to official statements, most major issues have been substantially resolved, with discussions continuing on a few remaining matters.

India's Demands

- Relief from Section 301-related tariff actions.
- Greater market access for Indian exports.
- Stable and predictable tariff arrangements.
- Preferential treatment compared to competing exporting nations.

US Priorities

- Addressing perceived trade barriers.
- Improving access for US businesses.
- Ensuring fair trade practices and compliance with US trade laws.

Additional Info

United States Trade Representative (USTR)

- Principal US agency responsible for trade negotiations and trade policy.
- Leads Section 301 investigations.
- Represents the United States in international trade matters.

Trade Act of 1974

- Landmark US legislation governing trade policy.
- Contains:
 - **Section 301** (unfair trade practices)
 - **Special 301** (intellectual property rights concerns)
 - Trade remedy provisions and market access mechanisms.

Section 301 vs WTO Dispute Settlement

Feature	Section 301	WTO Mechanism
Nature	Unilateral US action	Multilateral process
Authority	USTR	WTO Dispute Settlement Body
Scope	Alleged unfair trade practices	Violations of WTO agreements
Outcome	Tariffs, sanctions, restrictions	Authorized trade remedies

India-Oman CEPA: A New Boost to Trade, Investment and Employment

What's the News?

- The **India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** has come into force, marking a major milestone in bilateral economic relations.

- The agreement provides extensive market access, tariff concessions, and enhanced opportunities for trade in goods and services.
- It is expected to boost exports, attract investments, strengthen supply chains, and generate employment in both countries.

India-Oman CEPA

What is CEPA?

- A **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** is a broader trade agreement than a traditional Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- It covers:
 - Trade in goods.
 - Trade in services.
 - Investment facilitation.
 - Digital trade and economic cooperation.
 - Regulatory cooperation and trade facilitation.

Features

- India receives **100% duty-free market access** on **98.08% of Oman's tariff lines**, covering **99.38% of India's export value**.
- Tariff concessions become available immediately upon implementation.
- Sensitive sectors have been protected through exclusion lists and phased liberalization.

Major Benefits for India

Export Growth

The agreement is expected to benefit several export-oriented sectors:

- **Textiles and Apparel**
- **Leather and Footwear**
- **Agricultural Products**
- **Marine Products**
- **Engineering Goods**
- **Automobiles and Auto Components**
- **Pharmaceuticals**
- **Chemicals and Petrochemicals**
- **Sports Goods**

Services Sector Gains

- Improved opportunities for Indian professionals in:
 - Information Technology (IT)
 - Healthcare
 - Education
 - Engineering Services
 - Consulting Services
- Reduction of regulatory barriers in selected service sectors.

Employment Generation

- Increased exports are expected to create jobs in:
 - Manufacturing industries.
 - Labour-intensive sectors such as textiles and leather.

- Logistics and supply-chain services.
- Professional and digital services.

Strategic Significance

Gateway to the Gulf Region

- Oman serves as an important gateway to:
 - Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) markets.
 - East African markets.
 - West Asian trade corridors.
- CEPA strengthens India's **Act West Policy** and economic engagement in the Middle East.

Energy Security

- Oman is a key partner in:
 - Crude oil supplies.
 - LNG trade.
 - Petrochemical cooperation.
- The agreement supports diversification of energy and logistics partnerships.

Connectivity Benefits

- Greater utilization of Omani ports such as:
 - **Duqm Port**
 - **Salalah Port**
- Enhances India's maritime connectivity with West Asia, Africa, and Europe.

India-Oman Economic Relations

Trade Profile

- Oman is among India's important trading partners in the Gulf region.
- Key Indian exports:
 - Engineering goods
 - Food products
 - Textiles
 - Chemicals
 - Pharmaceuticals
- Key imports from Oman:
 - Crude oil
 - Natural gas
 - Petrochemicals
 - Fertilizers.

Investment Cooperation

- CEPA promotes:
 - Cross-border investments.
 - Joint ventures.
 - Technology partnerships.
 - Supply-chain integration.

Additional Info

Oman: Key Facts

- Capital: **Muscat**
- Currency: **Omani Rial**
- Sultan: **Haitham bin Tarik**
- Strategic Location:
 - Located at the entrance of the **Strait of Hormuz**, one of the world's most important energy shipping routes.

Difference Between FTA and CEPA

Feature	FTA	CEPA
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Focus	Goods trade	Goods, services, investment & economic cooperation
Scope	Limited	Comprehensive
Services Coverage	Usually limited	Extensive
Investment Provisions	Often absent	Included

United States Becomes India's Largest LPG Supplier

What's the News?

- The **United States** has emerged as India's largest supplier of **Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)**, surpassing traditional West Asian exporters.
- The shift is driven by supply disruptions and logistical uncertainties in the **Strait of Hormuz**, prompting Indian importers to diversify sourcing.
- Despite this change in LPG imports, **Russia** continues to remain India's largest supplier of crude oil.

India's LPG Import Shift

- India significantly increased LPG purchases from the US to ensure stable domestic supplies.
- The development reflects India's strategy of:
 - Diversifying energy import sources.
 - Reducing overdependence on any single region.
 - Strengthening energy security amid geopolitical uncertainties.
- The US has become a major global exporter of LPG due to its expanding shale oil and gas production.

Why is LPG Important for India?

- LPG is widely used for:
 - Domestic cooking fuel.
 - Commercial establishments.
 - Industrial applications.
- Demand has grown due to:
 - Expansion of clean cooking fuel access.
 - Government welfare initiatives.
 - Rising urbanization and household consumption.

Role of the Strait of Hormuz

- The **Strait of Hormuz** is one of the world's most critical energy chokepoints.
- It connects the:
 - **Persian Gulf**
 - **Gulf of Oman**
 - **Arabian Sea**

- A significant share of global:
 - Crude oil exports.
 - LPG exports.
 - LNG shipments. pass through this route.
- Any disruption can affect:
 - Energy prices.
 - Global supply chains.
 - Import-dependent economies like India.

Additional Info

Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)

- A mixture primarily consisting of:
 - Propane
 - Butane
- Stored and transported in liquid form under pressure.
- Considered a cleaner fuel compared to traditional biomass fuels.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)

- Launched: **2016**
- Ministry: **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**
- Objective:
 - Provide deposit-free LPG connections to poor households.
 - Promote clean cooking fuel usage.
 - Reduce indoor air pollution.

India's Energy Import Profile

- India imports over **80% of its crude oil requirements**.
- Major crude oil suppliers include:
 - Russia
 - Iraq
 - Saudi Arabia
 - United Arab Emirates
- Major LPG suppliers include:
 - United States
 - United Arab Emirates
 - Saudi Arabia
 - Qatar

Strait of Hormuz

- Located between:
 - **Iran** (north)
 - **Oman and UAE** (south)
- One of the world's most strategically important maritime chokepoints.

India Pledges \$2.5 Million to UNRWA for Palestinian Refugees

What's the News?

- India has released **\$2.5 million** in assistance to the **United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)**.
- The contribution is aimed at supporting **education, healthcare, relief and social services** for Palestinian refugees.

- The assistance reflects India's continued commitment to humanitarian support for the Palestinian people while reiterating its support for a **two-state solution** to the Israel-Palestine issue.

UNRWA Assistance

- The contribution will help UNRWA deliver:
 - **Primary healthcare services**
 - **School education**
 - **Relief and social welfare programmes**
 - Emergency humanitarian assistance for Palestinian refugees.
- India has been a consistent donor to UNRWA and has extended both bilateral developmental assistance and multilateral humanitarian support to Palestine.

India's Support for Palestine

- India maintains a policy of:
 - Supporting the **Palestinian cause**.
 - Advocating a **negotiated two-state solution**.
 - Providing humanitarian and developmental assistance.
- India's assistance to Palestine includes:
 - Capacity-building programmes.
 - Infrastructure and development projects.
 - Contributions through UN agencies such as UNRWA.
- India's developmental assistance to Palestine has reached nearly **\$80 million** over the past decade, demonstrating sustained engagement.

About UNRWA

- **Full Name: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)**.
- Established by the **UN General Assembly** in **1949**.
- Mandate:
 - Provide assistance and protection to Palestinian refugees.
 - Deliver education, healthcare, social services and emergency relief.
- Areas of operation:
 - **Jordan**
 - **Lebanon**
 - **Syria**
 - **West Bank**
 - **Gaza Strip**
- Serves more than **5.9 million registered Palestinian refugees**.



India-Palestine Relations

- India recognized the **State of Palestine** in 1988.
- India supports:
 - Peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue.
 - Sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian state living alongside Israel in peace and security.
- India balances its relations with both **Israel** and **Palestine**.

US Strike on Commercial Tanker Near Hormuz Kills Indian Seafarers

What's the News?

- A **US military strike** on a commercial oil tanker near the **Strait of Hormuz/Gulf of Oman** resulted in the deaths of **three Indian seafarers**, while several other Indian crew members were rescued.
- The vessel was carrying a predominantly Indian crew when it was targeted during heightened tensions linked to the ongoing **US-Iran maritime confrontation**.
- India lodged a strong protest and emphasized the need to protect merchant shipping and civilian seafarers.

Incident and Casualties

- The tanker was struck by US forces after being accused of violating a maritime blockade linked to Iranian oil shipments.
- Of the Indian crew members onboard:
 - **21 seafarers were rescued.**
 - **Three Indian sailors lost their lives**, including the Chief Engineer and other crew members.
- The rescue operation was supported by Omani authorities.

India's Response

- India registered a **strong diplomatic protest** with the United States.
- The Ministry of External Affairs reiterated:
 - Safety of merchant shipping must be ensured.
 - Civilian seafarers should never become casualties of geopolitical conflicts.
 - Regional disputes must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy.
- India also raised concerns over repeated attacks on merchant vessels carrying Indian crew members.

Criticism of US Actions

- The strike raises serious questions regarding the **principle of proportionality** under international law when civilian-crewed merchant vessels are involved.
- Even if a vessel is suspected of sanctions violations, the use of military force that results in civilian deaths is viewed by many observers as excessive and potentially avoidable.
- The incident highlights concerns regarding:
 - Protection of civilian seafarers.
 - Freedom and safety of international navigation.
 - Risks of unilateral military enforcement measures in international waters.
- International maritime bodies have emphasized that merchant shipping and seafarers should not become targets in geopolitical conflicts.
- Such actions can:
 - Escalate regional tensions.
 - Increase insurance and freight costs.
 - Threaten global energy security.
 - Endanger nationals of third countries who have no role in the conflict.

Additional Info

Strait of Hormuz

- Width: Approximately 33 km at its narrowest point.
- Borders:
 - **Iran** (North)
 - **Oman** and **UAE** (South)
- Strategic significance:
 - Vital route for crude oil and LNG exports from the Gulf region.

International Maritime Law

- Governed primarily by:
 - **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).**
 - International maritime safety conventions under the **International Maritime Organization (IMO).**
- Key principles:
 - Freedom of navigation.
 - Protection of civilian vessels.
 - Safety of seafarers.

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

- Specialized UN agency established in **1948**.
- Headquarters: **London, United Kingdom.**
- Objective:
 - Maritime safety and security.



- Prevention of marine pollution.
- Regulation of international shipping.

Bangladesh-India Border Cooperation and Deployment of Armed Village Guards

What's the News?

- **Bangladesh and India** have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation along the shared border through enhanced coordination between border management agencies.
- Simultaneously, Bangladesh has initiated the deployment of **armed Village Defence Party (VDP) personnel** in selected border areas to improve local security and curb cross-border crimes.
- The developments are aimed at improving border management, preventing illegal activities, and maintaining peace in border regions.

India-Bangladesh Border Cooperation

- Both countries emphasized:
 - Better coordination between border guarding forces.
 - Prevention of trans-border crimes.
 - Action against smuggling and illegal infiltration.
 - Maintenance of peace and stability along the border.
- Areas of cooperation include:
 - Intelligence sharing.
 - Joint border management mechanisms.
 - Confidence-building measures.
 - Prompt resolution of local border issues.

Armed Village Guards in Bangladesh

What is the Initiative?

- Bangladesh has deployed armed members of the **Village Defence Party (VDP)** in selected border areas.
- The move is intended to:
 - Improve surveillance in vulnerable border regions.
 - Assist law enforcement agencies.
 - Deter smuggling and other illegal cross-border activities.
 - Enhance community-based security mechanisms.

Village Defence Party (VDP)

- A community-based auxiliary force operating under the country's local security framework.
- Assists in:
 - Rural security.
 - Disaster response.
 - Community awareness programmes.

- Support to civil administration and law-enforcement agencies.

India-Bangladesh Border

Key Facts

- Length: Approximately **4,096 km**.
- It is India's longest international border with any neighbouring country.
- Shared by five Indian states:
 - **West Bengal**
 - **Assam**
 - **Meghalaya**
 - **Tripura**
 - **Mizoram**

Major Challenges

- Smuggling of goods and narcotics.
- Human trafficking.
- Illegal migration.
- Cattle smuggling.
- Cross-border criminal networks.

Border Management Mechanism

Border Security Force (BSF)

- India's primary border-guarding force on the Bangladesh border.
- Functions under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- Responsible for:
 - Border surveillance.
 - Prevention of trans-border crimes.
 - Border fencing and patrols.
 - Assisting civil authorities during emergencies.

Bilateral Border Management Measures

- Coordinated border patrols.
- Border Guard-level meetings.
- Joint Working Groups.
- Information and intelligence exchange.
- Flag meetings for local dispute resolution.

Border Guarding Forces

- **India:** Border Security Force (BSF).
- **Bangladesh:** Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

China Rejects Indian Chilli Shipments Over Pesticide Residue Concerns

What's the News?

- China has rejected multiple consignments of Indian chilli exports after detecting pesticide residues above its prescribed limits.
- The development has raised concerns among Indian exporters, particularly from major chilli-producing states, as China is an important market for Indian chillies.
- Exporters fear that stricter inspections and rejections could



adversely affect India's chilli exports and farmer incomes.

Why Did China Reject the Shipments?

Key Reason

- Chinese authorities reportedly found residues of certain pesticides beyond the **Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs)** permitted under their food safety regulations.
- As a result, several consignments were either rejected or subjected to enhanced scrutiny.

What are Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs)?

- MRLs refer to the highest legally permissible level of pesticide residue in food products.
- Countries establish their own standards based on risk assessments and food safety regulations.
- Exporters must comply with the destination country's MRL requirements to gain market access.

Impact on Indian Chilli Exports

Economic Concerns

- Exporters face:
 - Increased testing and compliance costs.
 - Delays in shipments.
 - Risk of loss of market share.
 - Potential decline in export earnings.

Impact on Farmers

- Lower export demand may affect farm-gate prices.
- Chilli growers could face challenges in marketing produce if export restrictions continue.
- Greater emphasis may be needed on residue-compliant cultivation practices.

India's Chilli Sector

Production

- India is among the world's largest producers, consumers, and exporters of chillies.
- Major chilli-producing states include:
 - Andhra Pradesh
 - Telangana
 - Karnataka
 - Madhya Pradesh
 - Odisha
 - Maharashtra

Export Significance

- Indian chillies are exported to:
 - China
 - Bangladesh
 - Thailand
 - Sri Lanka
 - Vietnam
 - Malaysia
 - Several West Asian countries

- Chilli exports contribute significantly to India's spice export basket.

Additional Info

Spices Board of India

- Autonomous body under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- Responsible for:
 - Promotion of spice exports.
 - Quality certification.
 - Export development.
 - Market promotion.

Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs)

- Established by:
 - National food safety regulators.
 - International bodies such as the **Codex Alimentarius Commission**.
- Purpose:
 - Protect consumer health.
 - Facilitate safe international trade in agricultural products.

Codex Alimentarius Commission

- Joint body of:
 - Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**.
 - World Health Organization (WHO)**.
- Develops international food standards, guidelines, and codes of practice.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

- Ecosystem-based approach to pest control.
- Combines:
 - Biological control.
 - Cultural practices.
 - Mechanical methods.
 - Judicious use of pesticides.

India-UK CETA and Social Security Agreement to Come into Force

What's the News?

The **India-United Kingdom Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)**, along with a **Double Contribution Convention (DCC)** on social security, will come into effect from **15 July 2026**. The agreement provides **duty-free access for nearly 99% of Indian exports** to the UK market and is expected to significantly boost bilateral trade, investment, and employment opportunities.

India-UK CETA

What is CETA?

The **Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)** is a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and the United Kingdom aimed at reducing trade barriers and enhancing economic cooperation.

Provisions

- Duty-free access for **99% of Indian export tariff lines**.

- Reduction or elimination of tariffs on a wide range of goods.
- Improved market access for services.
- Facilitation of investment flows.
- Enhanced cooperation in digital trade and innovation.
- Simplification of customs and trade procedures.

Double Contribution Convention (DCC)

What is the DCC?

The Double Contribution Convention is a social security agreement that prevents workers from making social security contributions in both countries simultaneously.

Features

- Indian professionals temporarily working in the UK will be exempt from paying UK social security contributions for a specified period if they continue contributing in India.
- Avoids double social-security payments.
- Reduces costs for Indian companies sending employees abroad.
- Enhances mobility of skilled professionals.

India-UK Trade Relations

Current Status

- The UK is among India's major trading partners.
- Bilateral trade has expanded significantly over the last decade.
- Both countries aim to further strengthen economic engagement through trade and investment cooperation.

Strategic Importance

The agreement supports:

- Diversification of export markets.
- Integration into global value chains.
- Supply-chain resilience.
- Strengthening of India-UK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Additional Info

Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

An FTA is an agreement between two or more countries to reduce or eliminate barriers to trade and investment.

Common Features

- Tariff reduction/elimination.
- Market access commitments.
- Rules of origin.
- Investment protection.
- Services trade liberalisation.

Difference Between FTA and CETA

Feature	FTA	CETA
Scope	Primarily goods trade	Goods, services, investment, digital trade

		and wider economic cooperation
Coverage	Limited	Comprehensive
Regulatory Cooperation	Limited	Extensive

India's Major Trade Agreements

- India-UAE CEPA
- India-Australia ECTA
- India-Mauritius CEPMA
- India-ASEAN FTA
- South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA)

CEPA vs CECA vs CETA

- **CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement):** Trade + investment + services.
- **CECA (Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement):** Broader economic cooperation, including trade and institutional collaboration.
- **CETA (Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement):** Comprehensive agreement covering goods, services, investment, regulatory cooperation, and trade facilitation.

India and Japan Adopt Rules for Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM)

What's the News?

India and Japan have adopted the **Rules of Implementation for the Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM)** under **Article 6.2 of the Paris Agreement**. The framework establishes procedures for implementing bilateral carbon-credit projects, facilitating technology transfer, climate finance, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions while supporting the climate goals of both countries.

Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM)

What is JCM?

- A bilateral carbon-crediting mechanism initiated by Japan.
- Promotes:
 - Deployment of low-carbon technologies.
 - Greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction and removal projects.
 - Climate finance and technology transfer.
 - Sharing of emission reduction credits between partner countries.

India-Japan JCM

- India and Japan signed a **Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC)** on JCM in 2025.
- India became one of Japan's partner countries under the JCM framework.
- The mechanism operates under **Article 6.2 of the Paris Agreement**, enabling



voluntary international cooperation in carbon markets.

Rules of Implementation

The newly adopted rules provide the operational framework for JCM projects.

Governance Framework

- Establishment of a **Joint Committee** comprising representatives from both governments.
- Responsible for:
 - Project approval.
 - Methodology approval.
 - Overall supervision of the mechanism.

Project Cycle

- Project registration through approved procedures.
- Monitoring and reporting of emission reductions.
- Independent third-party validation and verification.

Carbon Credit Accounting

- Issuance and transfer of carbon credits through national registries.
- Application of **corresponding adjustments** to prevent double counting of emission reductions.

Sustainable Development Criteria

- Projects must contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development objectives.

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement

Purpose

Article 6 enables countries to cooperate in achieving climate targets through market and non-market mechanisms.

Article 6.2

- Bilateral or multilateral cooperation between countries.
- Allows transfer of **Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs)**.

Article 6.4

- UN-supervised international carbon market mechanism.
- Successor to the **Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)** under the Kyoto Protocol.

Article 6.8

- Non-market approaches such as:
 - Technology transfer.
 - Capacity building.
 - Climate cooperation initiatives.

India's Carbon Market Framework

Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)

- Notified in 2023 by the Government of India.
- Establishes a domestic carbon market framework.
- Implemented through:
 - Ministry of Power

- Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)

Carbon Credit

- One carbon credit generally represents **one tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e)** reduced, avoided, or removed.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

What are NDCs?

- National climate action plans submitted under the Paris Agreement.
- Outline targets for emission reduction and climate adaptation.
- Updated every five years.

India's Key Climate Commitments

- Reduce emissions intensity of GDP.
- Increase non-fossil fuel-based energy capacity.
- Achieve **Net Zero emissions by 2070**.

Additional Info

Paris Agreement

- Adopted in 2015 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- Objective:
 - Limit global warming to well below 2°C.
 - Pursue efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C.

Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)

- Established under the Kyoto Protocol.
- Allowed developed countries to earn carbon credits by financing emission-reduction projects in developing countries.
- Replaced by the Article 6.4 mechanism.

Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)

- Statutory body under the Ministry of Power.
- Established under the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001**.
- Nodal agency for energy efficiency programmes in India.

World Bank Approves \$1.5 Billion Financing for Job Creation and Economic Growth in India

What's the News?

The World Bank has approved a **\$1.5 billion financing package** to support India's structural reform agenda under the **Boosting Job Creation in the Private Sector Development Policy Financing (DPF) Operation**. The initiative aims to accelerate **private sector-led job creation**, strengthen economic growth, improve labour market outcomes, and support reforms that enhance the business environment. The programme is expected to help create employment opportunities for

the nearly **11 million youth entering India's labour market annually** over the coming decades.

Boosting Job Creation DPF Operation

The Development Policy Financing (DPF) operation seeks to support policy and institutional reforms that:

- Increase private sector investment.
- Improve labour market efficiency.
- Expand employment opportunities, especially for youth and women.
- Promote sustainable economic growth.
- Enhance India's competitiveness and productivity.

Features

- Financing Amount: **US\$1.5 billion**
- Implementing Framework: **Development Policy Financing (DPF)**
- Focus: **Private sector-led employment generation**
- Target Group: Youth entering the labour market and job-seeking workforce.
- Approach: Supports policy reforms rather than financing a single infrastructure project.

Why is the Financing Important?

Employment Challenge

- Around **11 million young people** are expected to enter India's labour market every year over the next two decades.
- Sustained economic growth requires large-scale job creation beyond the public sector.
- The private sector is expected to play a central role in generating productive and formal employment opportunities.

Economic Impact

The reform package aims to:

- Improve the investment climate.
- Reduce barriers for businesses.
- Encourage entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Increase formal employment opportunities.
- Strengthen India's long-term growth prospects.

Development Policy Financing (DPF)

What is DPF?

Development Policy Financing is a World Bank lending instrument that provides financial assistance to countries undertaking policy and institutional reforms.

Characteristics

- Supports policy actions and reforms.
- Funds are generally linked to reform milestones.
- Does not finance a specific construction or infrastructure project.

- Aims to improve governance, economic management, and development outcomes.

Additional Info

World Bank

- Established: **1944**
- Headquarters: **Washington, D.C., USA**
- Origin: Created at the **Bretton Woods Conference (1944)** along with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- Purpose:
 - Poverty reduction
 - Economic development
 - Infrastructure financing
 - Policy reform support
- India is among the largest borrowers from the World Bank.

India-World Bank Partnership

- The India-World Bank Country Partnership Framework (FY26-FY31) prioritizes:
 - Job-rich growth
 - Private sector development
 - Skill enhancement
 - Youth employment
 - Women's economic participation
- The broader partnership envisages substantial financing support for India's development priorities.

Labour Reforms Context

- India's **Four Labour Codes** were introduced to consolidate and simplify 29 central labour laws.
- The reforms seek to improve ease of doing business while enhancing labour welfare and formalization of employment.

US Approves Support Package for India's Apache Helicopters and M777 Howitzers

What's the News?

The **United States** has approved a defence support package worth over **US\$428 million** (estimated at about **US\$482 million including associated services and equipment**) for India's **AH-64E Apache attack helicopters** and **M777 Ultra-Light Howitzers**. The package includes maintenance support, spare parts, logistics, training, and technical assistance aimed at enhancing the operational readiness of these key military platforms.

Details of the Support Package

Apache Helicopter Support

The package provides support for India's fleet of **AH-64E Apache attack helicopters**, including:

- Spare and repair parts.
- Ground support equipment.



- Maintenance and logistics services.
- Technical documentation.
- Training and engineering support.

M777 Howitzer Support

Support for the **M777 Ultra-Light Howitzers** includes:

- Replacement components and spare parts.
- Repair and maintenance services.
- Technical assistance.
- Logistical support for sustained operations.

The objective is to ensure higher availability and combat readiness of these systems deployed by the Indian Armed Forces.

AH-64E Apache Attack Helicopter

- Manufactured by Boeing.
- Multi-role attack helicopter.
- Equipped with:
 - Hellfire missiles.
 - Air-to-air missiles.
 - 30 mm chain gun.

- Advanced sensors and target acquisition systems.
- Capable of day and night operations.

Indian Service

- Operated by both the Indian Air Force and Indian Army.
- Used for:
 - Close air support.
 - Anti-armour operations.
 - Battlefield surveillance.

M777 Ultra-Light Howitzer

- 155 mm/39-calibre artillery gun.
- Weight: Approximately 4.2 tonnes.
- Constructed using titanium alloys for reduced weight.
- Can be transported by helicopters in mountainous terrain.
- Effective for rapid deployment in high-altitude regions.

India-US Defence Cooperation

Major Defence Agreements

India and the US have signed several foundational agreements:

- **LEMOA** (Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement) – 2016.
- **COMCASA** (Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement) – 2018.
- **BECA** (Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement) – 2020.

Defence Trade Growth

- India-US defence trade has grown from near-zero levels in 2008 to over **US\$20 billion** in recent years.
- The US is now among India's major defence partners.

Foreign Military Sales (FMS)

The support package is being processed through the **Foreign Military Sales (FMS)** programme of the United States.

FMS Programme

- Managed by the **US Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA)**.
- Facilitates government-to-government defence sales.
- Requires approval from the US Government and Congressional notification.

India and Israel Sign MoU on Public Sector Auditing

What's the News?

India and Israel have signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** to strengthen cooperation in **public sector auditing**. The agreement was signed between the **Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India** and the **Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) of Israel**. It aims to enhance collaboration through the exchange of audit methodologies, technical expertise, professional knowledge, training, and best practices, while promoting transparency, accountability and good governance.

Features of the MoU

- Establishes a framework for long-term institutional cooperation between the audit bodies of India and Israel.
- Covers:
 - Exchange of professional knowledge and audit methodologies.
 - Capacity building and technical expertise.
 - Training programmes for audit professionals.
 - Sharing of international best practices in public sector auditing.
- Both sides discussed organizing **bilateral seminars** alternately in India and Israel to facilitate knowledge exchange and innovation in auditing.

Focus on Technology in Auditing

During the visit, **Matanyahu Englman**, State Comptroller and Ombudsman of Israel, delivered a lecture under the **Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Lecture Series** on:

"Artificial Intelligence in Public Sector Auditing: Advanced Applications, Performance Auditing and Innovative Tools in Modern State Auditing."

The lecture highlighted the growing role of:

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)

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- Data analytics
 - Digital audit tools
 - Technology-enabled performance auditing
- in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public audits.

Additional Info

Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India

- Constitutional authority established under **Article 148** of the Constitution.
- Appointed by the **President of India**.
- Audits:
 - Union Government accounts.
 - State Government accounts.
 - Government companies and autonomous bodies (as prescribed).
- Submits audit reports to:
 - President (Union).
 - Governors (States).
- Known as the **Guardian of the Public Purse**.

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 148** – Comptroller and Auditor General of India.
- **Article 149** – Duties and powers of the CAG.
- **Article 150** – Form of Union and State accounts.
- **Article 151** – Audit reports to the President/Governor for laying before Parliament/State Legislature.

Supreme Audit Institution (SAI)

- The highest national public auditing authority responsible for auditing government revenues and expenditures.
- Functions independently to ensure accountability and sound public financial management.

EUROSAI

- **European Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions.**
- Regional organization of SAIs in Europe operating under the framework of **INTOSAI**.
- Promotes cooperation, knowledge sharing and capacity building among member audit institutions.

INTOSAI

- **International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions.**
- Global association of Supreme Audit Institutions.
- Established in **1953**.
- Develops international standards and best practices for public sector auditing.

India Rejects Pakistan's Remarks on Jammu & Kashmir at United Nations

What's the News?

India strongly rejected Pakistan's remarks on **Jammu & Kashmir** during a **United Nations** meeting in New York, reiterating that the **Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir is an integral and internal part of India**. India's Permanent Representative to the UN, **Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish**, accused Pakistan of politicising the forum and misusing its role as co-chair instead of maintaining neutrality.

India's Response

- India termed Pakistan's comments as **"unwarranted"** and **politically motivated**.
- Ambassador **Parvathaneni Harish** stated that:
 - **Jammu & Kashmir was, is and will remain** an internal matter of India.
 - Pakistan attempted to divert the forum from its intended agenda.
 - A co-chair of a UN meeting is expected to remain **balanced and impartial**.
- India reiterated its consistent position that issues relating to Jammu & Kashmir are to be addressed **bilaterally** between India and Pakistan.

UN Meeting

- The exchange took place during a UN meeting on:
 - **"Bridging the Implementation Gap: Security Council Resolutions and Maintenance of International Peace and Security."**
- Pakistan raised the Kashmir issue during its intervention.
- India exercised its **Right of Reply** to reject Pakistan's statements.

India's Position on Jammu & Kashmir

- Jammu & Kashmir is an **integral part of India**.
- India opposes attempts to **internationalise** the issue through multilateral forums.
- India maintains that all outstanding issues with Pakistan should be resolved **bilaterally** in accordance with the **Simla Agreement (1972)** and the **Lahore Declaration (1999)**.

Additional Info

Simla Agreement (1972)

- Signed between:

- **India:** Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.
- **Pakistan:** President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.
- Key provisions:
 - Resolve disputes through **bilateral negotiations**.
 - Respect the **Line of Control (LoC)**.
 - Refrain from the threat or use of force.

Lahore Declaration (1999)

- Signed by:
 - Prime Minister **Atal Bihari Vajpayee** (India).
 - Prime Minister **Nawaz Sharif** (Pakistan).
- Objectives:
 - Promote peace and security.
 - Strengthen confidence-building measures.
 - Resolve bilateral issues through dialogue.

Right of Reply

- A procedural mechanism in the **United Nations** allowing a member state to respond to statements made by another delegation when it believes its interests or position have been misrepresented.

India's Permanent Mission to the UN

- Represents India at the **United Nations Headquarters** in New York.
- Participates in deliberations of the:
 - UN General Assembly.
 - UN Security Council.
 - Other UN bodies and committees.

Bangladesh Joins International Big Cat Alliance as 27th Member

What's the News?

Bangladesh has officially joined the **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)**, becoming its **27th member country**. The accession strengthens regional and global cooperation for the conservation of big cats, particularly the **Bengal tiger** found in the shared **Sundarbans** ecosystem of India and Bangladesh.

What is the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)?

- A **treaty-based intergovernmental international organisation** dedicated to the conservation of big cats and their habitats.
- **Launched:** April 2023 during the commemoration of **50 years of Project Tiger** by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

- Became a **full-fledged treaty-based international organisation** on **23 January 2025**.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi, India.
- Promotes:
 - Conservation of big cats.
 - Capacity building.
 - Research and innovation.
 - Knowledge sharing.
 - Technical and financial cooperation among member countries.

Bangladesh's Membership

- Bangladesh became the **27th member** of the IBCA.
- The decision followed approval by Bangladesh's Cabinet after a proposal from its **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**.
- Membership is significant because:
 - India and Bangladesh share the **Sundarbans**, the world's largest mangrove forest.
 - The Sundarbans are a critical habitat for the **Royal Bengal Tiger**.
 - Joint conservation efforts are essential for managing transboundary wildlife populations.

Seven Big Cats Covered by IBCA

The Alliance focuses on conserving:

- Tiger
- Lion
- Leopard
- Snow Leopard
- Cheetah
- Jaguar
- Puma (Cougar)

These species are found across **95 range countries** worldwide.

Objectives of IBCA

- Strengthen international collaboration for big cat conservation.
- Protect habitats and biodiversity.
- Combat:
 - Poaching.
 - Illegal wildlife trade.
 - Habitat degradation.
 - Human-wildlife conflict.
- Facilitate:
 - Scientific research.
 - Capacity building.
 - Technology transfer.
 - Resource mobilisation.
- Support sustainable livelihoods in big cat landscapes.

Additional Info

Project Tiger

- **Launched:** 1973.



- Ministry: **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).**
- Objective:
 - Protect tigers and their habitats.
 - Reduce poaching.
 - Improve prey populations.
- India currently hosts **over 70% of the world's wild tiger population.**

Sundarbans

- World's largest mangrove forest.
- Shared by **India and Bangladesh.**
- **UNESCO World Heritage Site.**
- Located in the **Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna Delta.**
- Home to:
 - Royal Bengal Tiger.
 - Estuarine crocodile.
 - Fishing cat.
 - Irrawaddy dolphin.
 - Numerous migratory birds.

Features of IBCA

- Headquarters: **New Delhi.**
- Nature: Treaty-based intergovernmental organisation.
- Covers **95 big cat range countries.**
- India's initial support includes grant assistance to establish the alliance before it becomes self-sustaining through member contributions and partnerships.

India Hosts the 11th BRICS Energy Ministers' Meeting under BRICS Chairship 2026

What's the News?

India hosted the **11th BRICS Energy Ministers' Meeting** in Gurugram, Haryana, under its **BRICS Chairship 2026.** The meeting brought together Energy Ministers, Vice Ministers and senior officials from all **11 BRICS member countries** to strengthen cooperation on **energy security, sustainability, technology, and innovation.** The meeting concluded with the adoption of the **11th BRICS Energy Ministers' Joint Communiqué**, reaffirming cooperation on resilient and sustainable energy systems.

Themes of the Meeting

India's BRICS Energy Track was guided by the theme:

"सर्वेषां ऊर्जम् (Energy for All): Powering a Secure, Sustainable and Shared Future."

Three Priority Areas

- **Energy Security and Sustainability**
- **Energy Access and Equity**
- **Technology and Innovation**

These priorities aim to balance growing energy demand with climate commitments

while ensuring affordable and reliable energy for all.

Major Outcomes

11th BRICS Energy Ministers' Joint Communiqué

The participating countries agreed to strengthen cooperation in:

- Energy security and resilient supply chains.
 - Renewable and clean energy deployment.
 - Energy efficiency.
 - Grid modernisation and energy storage.
 - Hydrogen value chains.
 - Biofuels.
 - Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence in the energy sector.
 - Research, innovation and capacity building.
 - Sustainable energy infrastructure.
- The communiqué also reaffirmed respect for each country's national circumstances and energy transition pathways.

India's Priorities

India highlighted:

- Universal energy access.
- Affordable and sustainable energy.
- Clean energy transition.
- Collaboration among Global South countries.
- Expansion of renewable energy.
- International cooperation through multilateral platforms.

The meeting also served as a platform for India to advance the interests of the **Global South** in global energy governance.

BRICS Energy Cooperation

Pre-Ministerial Events

- Fourth Meeting of the **BRICS Committee of Senior Energy Officials.**
- Technical side events on:
 - Clean Coal Technologies.
 - Raising Electrical Appliance Standards.

Upcoming Event

- **BRICS Youth Energy Summit (Virtual)** to promote youth engagement and innovation in the energy sector.

About BRICS

Members (11)

- Brazil
- Russia
- India
- China
- South Africa
- Egypt
- Ethiopia
- Iran
- Indonesia
- Saudi Arabia



- United Arab Emirates

Significance

- Represents **nearly half of the world's population**.
- Accounts for **around 40% of global GDP**.
- Serves as a major platform for cooperation among emerging economies.

Additional Info

India's BRICS Chairship 2026

- **Theme:** *Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability (BRICS)*.
- **India's Chairships:** 2012, 2016, 2021 and 2026.
- Focuses on strengthening cooperation across energy, trade, technology, health, finance and sustainable development.

International Energy Initiatives

Highlighted

- **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**
 - Launched jointly by India and France.
 - Headquarters: Gurugram, Haryana.
 - Promotes solar energy deployment globally.
- **Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA)**
 - Launched during the **G20 Summit 2023** under India's Presidency.
 - Promotes international cooperation in sustainable biofuels.

35 Nations, Including India, Sign AI Opportunity Statement at Pax Silica Summit

What's the News?

India joined **34 other countries** in signing the **Joint Statement on AI Opportunity** at the **Second Pax Silica Summit** held in **Washington, D.C., USA**. The declaration aims to build **trusted and resilient global AI supply chains**, promote **innovation-friendly AI policies**, and strengthen international cooperation in critical technologies such as semiconductors, computing infrastructure, energy, and artificial intelligence.

Pax Silica Summit

- A US-led international initiative focused on securing the global ecosystem supporting Artificial Intelligence.
- Brings together governments, industry leaders, and technology experts to enhance cooperation on AI infrastructure and supply chains.
- The **Second Pax Silica Summit** witnessed participation from **35 countries**, including India.

Objectives

- Build trusted and resilient AI supply chains.
- Strengthen cooperation on semiconductor manufacturing.
- Promote secure access to critical minerals and energy resources.
- Encourage responsible and innovation-oriented AI development.
- Reduce vulnerabilities arising from concentrated technology supply chains.

Joint Statement on AI Opportunity

Commitments

The signatory countries agreed to:

- Promote a **pro-growth, pro-innovation** regulatory approach to AI.
- Develop trusted AI ecosystems based on transparency and cooperation.
- Strengthen global supply chains for:
 - AI chips and semiconductors.
 - Computing infrastructure.
 - Critical minerals.
 - Energy resources.
 - Advanced manufacturing.
- Encourage private sector investment and international collaboration.
- Support research, innovation and technological competitiveness.

India's Participation

India was represented by officials from:

- **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**
- **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)**

India's Priorities

- Expand semiconductor manufacturing.
- Strengthen AI innovation ecosystem.
- Attract global investment.
- Build resilient technology supply chains.
- Enhance cooperation with trusted international partners.

Additional Info

IndiaAI Mission

- **Launched:** 2024
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)
- **Objective:** Build a robust AI ecosystem through:
 - AI computing infrastructure.
 - Indigenous AI models.
 - Skilled AI workforce.
 - AI innovation and startups.
 - Responsible and ethical AI.

India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)

- Launched in **2021**.
- Aims to establish India as a global hub for semiconductor design and manufacturing.

- Provides financial support for semiconductor fabrication, packaging and display manufacturing.

SCO Women's Forum 2026 Held in Bishkek

What's the News?

The **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Women's Forum 2026** was held in **Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic**, under the theme "**Women's Leadership**". The forum brought together representatives from SCO member countries to discuss women's leadership, gender equality and economic empowerment. India reaffirmed its commitment to **women-led development**, with **Union Minister for Women and Child Development Annapurna Devi** addressing the forum virtually and showcasing India's achievements in women empowerment.

SCO Women's Forum 2026

Objectives

- Promote women's leadership in governance and decision-making.
- Enhance women's participation in socio-economic development.
- Strengthen cooperation among SCO member countries on gender equality.
- Exchange best practices on women's entrepreneurship, digital empowerment and financial inclusion.

Highlights

- Theme: "**Women's Leadership**".
- Hosted by **Kyrgyzstan**, the current SCO Chair.
- Focus areas included:
 - Women's economic empowerment.
 - Digital inclusion.
 - Entrepreneurship.
 - Leadership in public life.
 - Regional cooperation for inclusive development.

India's Participation

Points Highlighted

- India reiterated that women are **drivers of development, not merely beneficiaries**.
- Showcased major women-centric initiatives:
 - **Mission Shakti**.
 - **Mission Poshan 2.0**.
 - Self-Help Group (SHG) movement.
 - **Lakhpati Didi** initiative.
- Highlighted that:
 - Around **100 million women** are associated with over **9 million Self-Help Groups (SHGs)**.
 - More than **30 million women** have become **Lakhpati Didis** through livelihood enhancement programmes.

- Reaffirmed India's commitment to the **SCO Spirit** based on mutual trust, equality, consultation and shared development.

Additional Info

• Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

- Established: **2001**.
- Headquarters: **Beijing, China**.
- Members:
 - China
 - India
 - Kazakhstan
 - Kyrgyzstan
 - Pakistan
 - Russia
 - Tajikistan
 - Uzbekistan
 - Iran
 - Belarus
- Objectives:
 - Regional security.
 - Counter-terrorism.
 - Economic cooperation.
 - Cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

• SCO Spirit

- Mutual trust.
- Mutual benefit.
- Equality.
- Consultation.
- Respect for cultural diversity.
- Pursuit of common development.

• Women-Centric Initiatives Mentioned by India

- **Mission Shakti** – Umbrella scheme for women's safety, security and empowerment.
- **Mission Poshan 2.0** – Nutrition improvement for women and children.
- **Lakhpati Didi Initiative** – Aims to enable women Self-Help Group members to earn an annual income of at least **₹1 lakh**.
- **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)** – Promotes women-led SHGs and rural livelihoods.

India-Saudi Arabia Sign MoU on Water Resource Management

What's the News?

India and Saudi Arabia have signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** to strengthen bilateral cooperation in **water resource management**. Signed during **Saudi Water Week** in Jeddah, the agreement aims to promote collaboration in sustainable water management, irrigation, capacity

building, and exchange of best practices, further deepening the India-Saudi strategic partnership.

India-Saudi Water Management MoU

- The MoU establishes a framework for cooperation in the water sector between the two countries.
- It seeks to address growing challenges related to **water security**, efficient resource utilisation, and sustainable development.
- The agreement was signed by:
 - **Dr. Suhel Khan**, Ambassador of India to Saudi Arabia.
 - **Eng. Abdulrahman Abdulmohsen AlFadley**, Saudi Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture.

Areas of Cooperation

- Water resources planning.
- Sustainable water management.
- Irrigation systems and water-use efficiency.
- Capacity building and technical cooperation.
- Exchange of expertise, technology and best practices.
- Institutional collaboration in the water sector.

Additional Info

Water Resource Management (WRM)

- Refers to the planning, development, distribution and protection of water resources.
- Covers:
 - Surface water.
 - Groundwater.
 - Irrigation infrastructure.
 - Water-use efficiency.
 - Watershed management.
 - Water quality and conservation.

Saudi Water Week

- An international conference hosted in Saudi Arabia.
- Brings together policymakers, researchers, industry leaders and water experts.
- Focuses on:
 - Water security.
 - Desalination technologies.
 - Sustainable water management.
 - Innovation in the water sector.

India's Key Water Initiatives

- **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)** – Functional household tap water connections in rural areas.
- **Atal Bhujal Yojana (Atal Jal)** – Sustainable groundwater management in water-stressed areas.

- **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)** – "Har Khet Ko Pani" and efficient irrigation.
- **National Water Mission** – One of the eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).

India-Saudi Arabia Relations

- Elevated to a **Strategic Partnership Council (SPC)** in **2019**.
- Cooperation spans:
 - Energy.
 - Investment.
 - Defence.
 - Food security.
 - Technology.
 - Water resources.

International Events

China Achieves First Combined Pig Liver and Kidney Transplant in Human

What's the News?

- Chinese surgeons successfully performed the world's first **simultaneous transplantation of a pig liver and two pig kidneys into a human recipient**.
- The organs were sourced from a **genetically modified pig** designed to reduce immune rejection.
- The procedure represents a major breakthrough in **xenotransplantation** and could help address the global shortage of donor organs.

Xenotransplantation

- Xenotransplantation** refers to the transplantation of living cells, tissues, or organs from one species to another.
- Pigs are considered the most suitable donor animals because:
 - Their organs are similar in size and physiology to human organs.
 - They reproduce quickly.
 - Genetic modifications can improve compatibility with humans.

Why Are Genetically Modified Pigs Used?

- Pig organs naturally trigger strong immune rejection in humans.
- Scientists use gene-editing technologies such as **CRISPR-Cas9** to:
 - Remove genes responsible for immune rejection.
 - Introduce human-compatible genes.
 - Reduce blood clotting complications after transplantation.
- The latest transplant used a **six-gene-edited pig** with modifications aimed at improving organ acceptance.

Significance of the Breakthrough Addressing Organ Shortage

- Demand for donor organs far exceeds supply worldwide.
- Thousands of patients die annually while waiting for organ transplants.
- Xenotransplantation could provide a sustainable alternative source of organs.

Multi-Organ Transplant Milestone

- Previous pig-to-human experiments largely involved:

- Hearts
- Kidneys
- Partial liver grafts
- Lungs

- This is the **first reported simultaneous transplant of multiple major pig organs into a human recipient**, demonstrating the feasibility of multi-organ xenotransplantation.

Challenges in Xenotransplantation

Immune Rejection

- Human immune systems recognize animal organs as foreign.
- Rejection remains the biggest obstacle to long-term transplant success.

Risk of Infections

- Potential transmission of animal pathogens to humans requires strict monitoring.

Ethical Concerns

- Animal welfare considerations.
- Long-term safety and regulatory oversight.
- Public acceptance of animal-to-human organ transplantation.

Long-Term Organ Function

- Scientists are still studying:
 - Organ durability.
 - Physiological compatibility.
 - Long-term survival outcomes.

Recent Advances in Pig-to-Human Transplantation

- Gene-edited pig kidneys have been transplanted into human recipients in both China and the United States.
- China previously demonstrated:
 - Pig liver transplantation in a brain-dead recipient.
 - Pig liver support in a living patient for an extended period.
 - Experimental pig lung transplantation.
- These developments indicate rapid progress in clinical xenotransplantation research.

Additional Info

CRISPR-Cas9

- A genome-editing technology used to:
 - Add, remove, or modify specific DNA sequences.
 - Create disease-resistant or human-compatible animal organs.
- Widely used in biomedical and genetic research.

Why the Liver Is Difficult to Transplant

- The liver performs over **500 vital functions**, including:



- Metabolism.
- Detoxification.
- Protein synthesis.
- Bile production.
- Replicating these functions through xenotransplantation is more challenging than kidney transplantation.

Bangladesh Elected to Lead 81st UN General Assembly Session

What's the News?

- **Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Dr. Khalilur Rahman** has been elected as the **President of the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)**.
- He defeated the candidate from Cyprus in a closely contested election held among UN member states.
- Bangladesh will preside over the UN's most representative deliberative body during a period marked by discussions on global governance reforms, sustainable development, peace, and multilateral cooperation.

President of the UN General Assembly (PGA)

Who is the President of the UNGA?

- The **President of the United Nations General Assembly (PGA)** is elected by UN member states.
- Serves a **one-year term**.
- Presides over meetings of the General Assembly and facilitates negotiations among member countries.
- Represents the General Assembly in international forums and diplomatic engagements.

Key Functions

- Conducts plenary meetings of the General Assembly.
- Builds consensus on global issues.
- Oversees debates on:
 - International peace and security.
 - Sustainable development.
 - Human rights.
 - Climate action.
 - UN reforms.
- Facilitates adoption of resolutions and declarations.

Significance for Bangladesh Diplomatic Achievement

- Reflects Bangladesh's growing visibility and engagement in multilateral diplomacy.
- Marks Bangladesh's return to the presidency of the General Assembly after nearly four decades.

Enhanced Global Profile

- Provides Bangladesh with greater influence in:
 - Global governance discussions.
 - Development cooperation.
 - South-South cooperation.
 - Climate and migration-related negotiations.

Regional Significance

- Strengthens the representation of developing countries within the UN system.
- Highlights the increasing role of South Asian countries in multilateral institutions.

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

About UNGA

- One of the **six principal organs** of the **United Nations (UN)**.
- Established under the **UN Charter, 1945**.
- Comprises **all 193 UN member states**.
- Each member state has **one vote** regardless of size or economic strength.

Powers and Functions

- Discusses and makes recommendations on international issues.
- Approves the UN budget.
- Elects:
 - Non-permanent members of the UN Security Council.
 - Members of ECOSOC.
 - Judges of the International Court of Justice (jointly with the Security Council).
- Appoints the **UN Secretary-General** upon recommendation of the Security Council.
- Adopts resolutions reflecting global opinion.

Decision-Making

- Important matters generally require a **two-thirds majority**.
- Other issues are decided by a **simple majority**.

About Dr. Khalilur Rahman

- Current **Foreign Minister of Bangladesh**.
- Previously served as:
 - National Security Adviser.
 - Diplomat and policy expert.
 - Representative on international development and refugee-related issues.
- Known for his work in multilateral diplomacy and international cooperation.

**Additional Info****Six Principal Organs of the United Nations**

- **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)**
- **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**
- **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**
- **International Court of Justice (ICJ)**
- **UN Secretariat**
- **Trusteeship Council** (currently inactive)

India and UNGA

- India is a founding member of the United Nations.
- Frequently uses the UNGA platform to advocate:
 - UN reforms.
 - Counter-terrorism measures.
 - Sustainable development.
 - Global South priorities.
 - Climate justice.

Portugal, Austria, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zimbabwe Elected as Non-Permanent Members of the UN Security Council

What's the News?

- The **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** elected **Portugal, Austria, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zimbabwe** as non-permanent members of the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**.
- The newly elected countries will serve a **two-year term** on the Council beginning next year.
- The elections were held to fill seats becoming vacant at the end of the current members' terms.
- The outcome also highlighted the competitive nature of regional representation in the UN system.

UN Security Council (UNSC)

- The **UNSC** is the principal organ of the United Nations responsible for maintaining international peace and security.
- It consists of **15 members**:
 - **5 Permanent Members (P5)**
 - China
 - France
 - Russia
 - United Kingdom
 - United States
 - **10 Non-Permanent Members**
 - Elected by the UN General Assembly for a two-year term.
- Each member has one vote, but the P5 possess **veto power**.

How are Non-Permanent Members Elected?

- Elections are conducted by the **UN General Assembly** through secret ballot.
- A candidate must secure a **two-thirds majority** of members present and voting.
- Seats are distributed according to regional groups:
 - African Group
 - Asia-Pacific Group
 - Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC)
 - Western European and Others Group (WEOG)
 - Eastern European Group

Why is the UNSC Important?

- Responsible for:
 - Maintaining international peace and security.
 - Authorizing peacekeeping missions.
 - Imposing sanctions.
 - Approving collective military action when necessary.
- Its resolutions adopted under the UN Charter are binding on member states.

Additional Info**India and the UNSC**

- India has served as a non-permanent member of the UNSC **eight times**.
- Most recent term:
 - **2021–2022**
- India advocates:
 - Expansion of the UNSC.
 - Greater representation for developing countries.
 - Permanent membership for India.

G4 Nations

- Group advocating UNSC reforms:
 - **India**
 - **Germany**
 - **Japan**
 - **Brazil**
- Support expansion of both permanent and non-permanent categories of membership.

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

- Comprises all **193 UN Member States**.
- Functions include:
 - Election of non-permanent UNSC members.
 - Approval of UN budget.
 - Discussion of international issues.
- Decisions are generally non-binding but carry significant political weight.



NASA Ends MAVEN Mission After More Than a Decade of Mars Exploration

What's the News?

- NASA has officially concluded the **Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution (MAVEN)** mission after losing contact with the spacecraft and determining that it could not be recovered.
- The spacecraft operated around Mars for over **11 years**, greatly exceeding its originally planned mission duration.
- MAVEN made significant contributions to understanding how Mars lost much of its atmosphere and transformed from a potentially habitable planet into the cold, dry world seen today.

What is the MAVEN Mission?

- **MAVEN (Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution)** was NASA's first mission dedicated to studying the **upper atmosphere of Mars**.
- Objectives:
 - Understand atmospheric loss from Mars.
 - Study interactions between the Martian atmosphere and the **solar wind**.
 - Determine how climate changes affected the planet's habitability.
- The spacecraft entered Mars orbit in **2014** after being launched in **2013**.

Major Scientific Contributions

- Provided evidence that:
 - Solar wind continuously strips away the Martian atmosphere.
 - Large solar storms accelerate atmospheric erosion.
- Helped explain:
 - How Mars lost much of its water and atmosphere over billions of years.
 - The transition of Mars from a warmer, wetter environment to its present state.
- Recorded:
 - Martian auroras.
 - Variations in the ionosphere and magnetosphere.
 - Interactions between the atmosphere and space environment.

Why Did the Mission End?

- Communication with MAVEN was lost after the spacecraft passed behind Mars.
- Preliminary investigations suggest:
 - The spacecraft entered an unexpected rapid spin.
 - Battery power was depleted.

- Recovery efforts were unsuccessful.

- NASA subsequently declared the spacecraft to be in an **unrecoverable state** and ended the mission.

Additional Info

Mars Atmosphere

- Present atmosphere is:
 - Extremely thin.
 - Composed mainly of carbon dioxide.
- Atmospheric pressure is less than **1% of Earth's** surface pressure.

Solar Wind

- Stream of charged particles emitted by the Sun.
- Can gradually erode planetary atmospheres lacking strong global magnetic fields.
- Mars lost its global magnetic field billions of years ago, making atmospheric escape easier.

Mars Missions of India

- **Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan)**
 - Launched by **ISRO**.
 - Made India the first Asian nation to reach Mars orbit.
 - First country to achieve Mars orbit success on its maiden attempt.

Other Active Mars Orbiters

- **Mars Odyssey (NASA)**
- **Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (NASA)**
- **ExoMars Trace Gas Orbiter (ESA-Roscosmos)**

Bonn Climate Conference 2026: Call for \$120 Billion Adaptation Finance

What's the News?

- At the **Bonn Climate Conference 2026**, global health and climate organizations urged developed countries to increase **adaptation finance** to at least **US\$120 billion annually by 2035**.
- The demand highlights the growing impact of climate change on public health, food systems, water security, and vulnerable communities.
- Discussions focused on strengthening implementation of climate commitments ahead of the next round of negotiations under the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**.

Bonn Climate Conference

- The Bonn Climate Conference serves as the principal mid-year climate negotiation meeting under the **UNFCCC**.
- It brings together:



- Governments.
- International organizations.
- Climate experts.
- Civil society groups.
- The conference helps prepare the agenda and negotiation outcomes for the annual **Conference of the Parties (COP)**.

Adaptation Finance Target Proposed Goal

- Increase global adaptation finance to:
 - **US\$120 billion per year by 2035.**
- The proposed amount is nearly three times current adaptation finance commitments.

Key Concern

- Developing countries face a widening gap between adaptation needs and available financial resources.
- Vulnerable nations are disproportionately affected despite contributing less to historical greenhouse gas emissions.

Significance for India

- India remains highly vulnerable to:
 - Extreme heat events.
 - Floods.
 - Cyclones.
 - Droughts.
 - Glacier-related risks.

Additional Info

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

- Adopted: **1992** at the Rio Earth Summit.
- Objective: Stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations to prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.
- Secretariat: **Bonn, Germany.**
- **Conference of the Parties (COP)**
- Supreme decision-making body of the UNFCCC.
- Meets annually to review implementation of climate commitments.
- Key outcomes include:
 - **Kyoto Protocol (1997).**
 - **Paris Agreement (2015).**

Paris Agreement

- Adopted under the UNFCCC.
- Goal:
 - Limit global temperature rise to well below **2°C** above pre-industrial levels.
 - Pursue efforts to limit warming to **1.5°C.**

Key Climate Finance Terms

- **Adaptation Finance:** Funding aimed at helping countries adjust to climate change impacts.

- **Loss and Damage:** Financial support for countries suffering irreversible climate-related losses.
- **Climate Resilience:** Capacity of systems and communities to withstand and recover from climate shocks.

COP31 Hosts Propose "35 by 35" Global Electrification Target

What's the News?

- The joint hosts of **COP31—Türkiye and Australia**—have proposed a global target to increase electricity's share in final energy consumption to **35% by 2035.**
- The proposal, known as the **"35 by 35" Electrification Target**, was announced during the **Bonn Climate Conference**, a key preparatory meeting for COP31.
- The initiative aims to accelerate the global transition away from fossil fuels by expanding the use of electricity in transport, industry, buildings, and household energy use.

What is the "35 by 35" Target?

- Seeks to raise the share of global final energy demand met by electricity:
 - **Current level:** Just over **20%**
 - **Target level:** **35% by 2035**
- Focuses on replacing fossil-fuel-based energy consumption with cleaner electricity across sectors.

Why Electrification Matters?

- Electrification is considered one of the most effective pathways for decarbonization.
- Supports adoption of:
 - **Electric Vehicles (EVs)**
 - **Heat pumps**
 - Electric industrial processes
 - Clean cooking technologies
- Expected benefits:
 - Reduced dependence on coal, oil, and natural gas.
 - Improved energy security.
 - Lower greenhouse gas emissions.
 - Better air quality and public health outcomes.

Other COP31 Action Agenda Targets

Alongside the electrification goal, the COP31 Presidency announced additional global targets:

- **Waste Management Target:** Halve the growth of global waste by 2035.
- **Resilient Cities Target:** Reduce energy-consumption intensity in the building sector by at least **25% by 2035.**

- **Circular Economy Goal:** Increase the global circular material use rate to at least **15% by 2035**.

Additional Info

COP31

- **31st Conference of the Parties (COP31)** under the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**.
- Scheduled to be hosted in **Antalya, Türkiye** under the joint presidency of Türkiye and Australia.

Bonn Climate Conference

- Officially known as the meetings of the **UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (SBs)**.
- Serves as the primary preparatory platform for annual COP negotiations.
- Focus areas include:
 - Climate finance
 - Adaptation
 - Mitigation
 - Technology transfer
 - Loss and Damage
 - Just Transition

International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)

- Intergovernmental organization promoting renewable energy adoption worldwide.
- Provides policy guidance and technical support for energy transition initiatives.
- Headquartered in **Abu Dhabi, UAE**.

International Energy Agency (IEA)

- Intergovernmental organization focused on global energy security and sustainable energy transitions.
- COP31 Presidency has commissioned the IEA to analyse pathways for achieving the electrification target.

UNHCR Reports First Global Decline in Forced Displacement in 2025

What's the News?

- The **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** reported the **first decline in global forced displacement in over a decade** during 2025.
- Despite the decline, the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide remains at historically high levels, highlighting the persistence of long-term refugee crises.
- The reduction was mainly driven by improvements in some conflict situations and the return of displaced populations to their places of origin.

Global Displacement Trends

According to UNHCR's Global Trends Report:

- Global forced displacement fell from its record peak reached in previous years.
- More refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) were able to return home compared to recent years.
- However, displacement levels remain significantly higher than pre-2020 levels.
- Major drivers of displacement continue to include:
 - Armed conflicts
 - Political instability
 - Human rights violations
 - Climate-related disasters

Long-Term Refugee Crisis Persists

- UNHCR highlighted that many displacement situations have become **protracted crises**, lasting for years or even decades.
- Large refugee populations continue to depend on international humanitarian assistance.
- Key regions contributing to global displacement include:
 - **Sudan**
 - **Syria**
 - **Afghanistan**
 - **Ukraine**
 - **Myanmar**
- Durable solutions such as voluntary repatriation, local integration and third-country resettlement remain limited.

Findings of the UNHCR Report

- More people returned to their home countries during the year, contributing to the overall decline.
- Internal displacement continues to account for a major share of global forced displacement.
- Developing countries continue to host the majority of the world's refugees.
- Humanitarian agencies face funding shortages despite growing protection and rehabilitation needs.

About UNHCR

- **Full Name:** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
- Established in **1950** by the **United Nations General Assembly**.
- Headquarters: **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- Mandate:
 - Protect refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons.
 - Coordinate international action for refugee assistance.



- Support voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement.
- Recipient of the **Nobel Peace Prize** twice:
 - 1954
 - 1981

Additional Info

Refugee

- Defined under the **1951 Refugee Convention** as a person who:
 - Has crossed an international border.
 - Has a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership of a social group, or political opinion.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

- People forced to leave their homes but who remain within their country's borders.
- Protected primarily under national laws and international humanitarian law.

India's Position

- India is **not a signatory** to:
 - **1951 Refugee Convention**
 - **1967 Protocol**
- Refugee management in India is governed through:
 - Executive and administrative measures.
 - Relevant provisions of the **Foreigners Act, 1946** and other domestic laws.
- India hosts refugee communities from countries such as:
 - Tibet (China)
 - Sri Lanka
 - Myanmar
 - Afghanistan

Global Peace Index (GPI) 2026: India Slips to 127th Rank

What's the News?

- The **Global Peace Index (GPI) 2026**, released by the **Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP)**, reported a further decline in global peacefulness.
- **India's ranking fell from 115th to 127th position**, marking one of the notable deteriorations in South Asia.
- The report identifies rising conflicts, geopolitical tensions, and militarisation as key drivers behind the worsening global peace environment.

- **South Asia recorded the largest regional deterioration in peacefulness** among all world regions.

India's Performance in GPI 2026

- **India ranked 127th** in the 2026 index.
- India's peacefulness score deteriorated by **2.9%** compared to the previous edition.
- The decline was driven primarily by worsening performance in:
 - **Ongoing Conflict** indicators.
 - Regional security concerns.
 - Geopolitical tensions.

Regional Comparison

- India ranked below:
 - **Bhutan**
 - **Sri Lanka**
 - **Bangladesh**
 - **Nepal**
- India ranked above:
 - **Pakistan**
 - **Afghanistan**

South Asia: Key Trends

Largest Regional Decline

- South Asia experienced the **sharpest deterioration in peacefulness globally**.
- Contributing factors included:
 - Interstate tensions.
 - Political instability.
 - Internal conflicts.
 - Security-related challenges.

Regional Rankings

- **Bhutan** remained the most peaceful country in South Asia.
- **Afghanistan** continued to remain among the least peaceful countries globally.

Global Peace Index (GPI)

What is GPI?

- The **Global Peace Index** is an annual report measuring the relative peacefulness of countries.
- Published by the **Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP)**.
- Covers more than **160 countries and territories**.

Assessment Parameters

The index evaluates countries across three broad domains:

- **Safety and Security**
 - Crime levels.
 - Political stability.
 - Terrorism impact.
 - Violent crime.
- **Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict**
 - Internal conflicts.
 - External conflicts.
 - Conflict intensity and duration.
- **Militarisation**
 - Military expenditure.



- Armed forces personnel.
- Weapons imports and exports.

Top 10 Most Peaceful Countries (GPI 2026)

1. Iceland
2. Ireland
3. New Zealand
4. Austria
5. Switzerland
6. Singapore
7. Portugal
8. Denmark
9. Slovenia
10. Finland

Major Global Findings

Global Peace Continues to Decline

- Global peacefulness declined for another consecutive year.
- More countries recorded deterioration than improvement.

Rising Conflict Levels

- The number of active conflicts worldwide increased significantly.
- Geopolitical competition and interstate tensions intensified.

Growing Militarisation

- Defence spending increased across many regions.
- Strategic competition among major powers contributed to heightened security concerns.

Additional Info

Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP)

- Independent global think tank headquartered in **Sydney, Australia**.
- Develops major indices including:
 - **Global Peace Index (GPI)**.
 - **Global Terrorism Index (GTI)**.
 - **Positive Peace Index (PPI)**.

Positive Peace

- Refers to the institutions, structures, and attitudes that sustain peaceful societies.

Eight Pillars of Positive Peace

- Well-functioning government.
- Sound business environment.
- Equitable distribution of resources.
- Acceptance of the rights of others.
- Good relations with neighbours.
- Free flow of information.
- High levels of human capital.
- Low corruption.

SpaceX Becomes the World's Fifth Most Valuable Company

What's the News?

Private space company **SpaceX** has reached a valuation of about **\$400 billion**, overtaking **Amazon** to become the **world's fifth most valuable company**. The valuation

emerged from a share sale transaction and reflects growing investor confidence in SpaceX's launch services, satellite internet business, and future space exploration ventures.

SpaceX's Record Valuation

Highlights

- SpaceX's valuation reached approximately **\$400 billion**.
- It surpassed Amazon's market valuation at the time of assessment.
- Became the **highest-valued private company in the world**.
- The valuation increased significantly from previous funding rounds, reflecting rapid business expansion.

Major Growth Drivers

- Reusable rocket technology.
- Commercial satellite launch services.
- Expansion of the Starlink satellite internet network.
- Government and defence contracts.
- Future ambitions in lunar and Mars missions.

What is SpaceX?

Overview

- Founded in **2002** by Elon Musk.
- Headquarters: Hawthorne.
- Objective:
 - Reduce the cost of space transportation.
 - Enable human settlement beyond Earth.

Major Launch Vehicles

Falcon 9

- World's most frequently launched orbital rocket.
- Known for reusable first-stage boosters.

Falcon Heavy

- One of the most powerful operational rockets.

Starship

- Designed for Moon and Mars missions.
- Intended to become the world's most powerful launch system.

Starlink: A Key Contributor

What is Starlink?

- Satellite-based broadband internet constellation operated by SpaceX.
- Provides internet connectivity to remote and underserved regions.

Features

- Thousands of Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites.
- Lower latency compared to traditional satellite internet.
- Expanding coverage across multiple continents.

Importance

- Major source of recurring revenue for SpaceX.
- Supports digital connectivity in rural and disaster-affected areas.

Global Corporate Valuation Landscape

Most Valuable Companies (Indicative)

Leading global companies by valuation include:

1. Microsoft
2. NVIDIA
3. Apple
4. Alphabet
5. SpaceX

Rankings may vary depending on market movements and valuation methodology.

Additional Info

Reusable Rocket Technology

- Allows rocket stages to be recovered and reused.
- Reduces launch costs significantly.
- Improves launch frequency and operational efficiency.

Low Earth Orbit (LEO)

- Altitude: approximately **160–2,000 km** above Earth.
- Used for:
 - Communication satellites.
 - Earth observation satellites.
 - Scientific missions.

IN-SPACE

- Autonomous agency under the Department of Space.
- Facilitates participation of private entities in India's space sector.

US–Iran Interim Peace Pact: Conflict Halted, Strait of Hormuz Reopened

What's the News?

The United States and Iran have announced a **14-point interim agreement** aimed at halting escalating hostilities in West Asia and restoring stability in the region. The agreement includes a ceasefire framework, reopening of the **Strait of Hormuz**, commitments related to nuclear activities, maritime security measures, and mechanisms for further negotiations. The pact seeks to reduce regional tensions, stabilize global energy markets, and prevent a broader conflict involving multiple regional actors.

The 14-Point Interim Pact

Provisions

- Immediate cessation of military hostilities.
- Reopening of the **Strait of Hormuz** for commercial shipping.

- Protection of international maritime routes.
- Resumption of diplomatic engagement between the parties.
- Commitments to avoid attacks on civilian and energy infrastructure.
- Framework for addressing nuclear-related concerns through negotiations.
- Establishment of monitoring and verification mechanisms.
- Steps toward regional de-escalation and confidence-building.

Strait of Hormuz

Why is it Important?

- A narrow maritime passage connecting the **Persian Gulf** with the **Gulf of Oman** and the **Arabian Sea**.
- One of the world's most critical energy chokepoints.
- A significant share of globally traded crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) passes through it.

Strategic Significance

- Vital for oil exports from:
 - Iran
 - Saudi Arabia
 - Iraq
 - Kuwait
 - United Arab Emirates
 - Qatar
- Any disruption can trigger:
 - Higher global oil prices.
 - Supply chain disruptions.
 - Inflationary pressures worldwide.

Iran's Nuclear Programme

Background

- Iran's nuclear programme has been a longstanding source of international concern.
- The issue centers on uranium enrichment activities and the potential for weaponization.
- Several rounds of negotiations have taken place over the years involving major world powers.

Agreements

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – 2015

- Agreement between Iran and P5+1 countries.
- Imposed restrictions on Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief.
- Monitoring conducted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).



International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

Overview

- Established in 1957.
- Headquarters: Vienna
- Autonomous organization associated with the United Nations.

Functions

- Promotes peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
- Conducts inspections and safeguards.
- Monitors compliance with nuclear agreements.

Keir Starmer Resigns as UK Prime Minister

What's the News?

Keir Starmer has announced his resignation as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom after less than two years in office. The decision came amid growing pressure within the ruling **Labour Party**, declining public support, electoral setbacks, and concerns over the party's future prospects. Starmer stated that an orderly leadership transition was necessary in the national interest.

Why Did Starmer Resign?

Political Pressure

Several factors contributed to the resignation:

- Falling approval ratings and declining voter confidence.
- Poor performance in local elections.
- Growing influence of **Nigel Farage** and the rise of **Reform UK**.
- Internal criticism from Labour MPs and cabinet members regarding leadership and communication.

Governance Challenges

Starmer's government faced criticism over:

- Economic management and cost-of-living concerns.
- Immigration and public service delivery.
- Policy reversals and leadership controversies.
- Internal party divisions and declining public trust.

What Happens Next?

Leadership Transition

- Starmer will remain in office during the transition period.
- **Andy Burnham** has emerged as the leading contender to succeed him.
- Senior Labour leaders have largely rallied behind Burnham, making him the likely next Labour leader and Prime Minister.

Political Significance

If Burnham assumes office:

- The UK will have had **seven Prime Ministers in roughly a decade**.
- The transition could reshape Labour's electoral strategy ahead of future elections.
- Opposition parties are demanding a fresh electoral mandate.

Keir Starmer: A Brief Overview

Political Career

- Leader of the Labour Party since 2020.
- Prime Minister since Labour's landslide victory in the 2024 General Election.
- Former Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) of England and Wales.
- Knighted in 2014 for services to criminal justice.

Major Policies During Premiership

- Strengthening workers' rights.
- Establishment of Great British Energy.
- NHS reform initiatives.
- Support for Ukraine.
- Trade agreements with major economies, including India.

UK Prime Minister: Appointment Process

Constitutional Position

- The UK follows a **Parliamentary System**.
- The Prime Minister is usually the leader of the majority party in the **House of Commons**.
- Formally appointed by **King Charles III**.

No Automatic General Election

A Prime Minister's resignation does **not** automatically trigger a general election.

A new Prime Minister can be appointed if:

- The governing party elects a new leader.
- The new leader can command a majority in the House of Commons.

Additional Info

Labour Party

- Founded: 1900
- Ideology: Centre-left social democracy.
- Current Status: Governing party in the UK since the 2024 General Election.

Reform UK

- Led by **Nigel Farage**.
- Gained significant electoral support in recent local elections.
- Emerged as a major challenge to both Labour and Conservative parties.

UK Political System

- Constitutional Monarchy.
- Parliamentary Democracy.



- Legislature:
 - House of Commons (Lower House)
 - House of Lords (Upper House)

European Union Joins Pax Silica AI Supply Chain Initiative

What's the News?

The **European Union (EU)** has joined the **US-led Pax Silica Initiative**, a strategic coalition aimed at building secure and resilient **AI supply chains** by reducing dependence on China in critical sectors such as semiconductors, critical minerals, energy, advanced manufacturing and digital infrastructure. The initiative also saw the participation of **Germany, the Netherlands and Greece**, strengthening transatlantic cooperation on AI and semiconductor ecosystems.

What is Pax Silica?

- **Pax Silica** is a US-led international initiative launched in **December 2025**.
- It seeks to create **trusted and resilient AI supply chains** among partner countries.
- The initiative promotes cooperation in:
 - Semiconductors (AI chips)
 - Critical minerals and rare earths
 - AI infrastructure and computing
 - Advanced manufacturing
 - Energy and logistics
 - Secure digital infrastructure
- It is based on a **non-binding political declaration** among participating countries.

Why Has the EU Joined?

The EU's participation aims to:

- Reduce strategic dependence on China for AI-related technologies.
- Strengthen semiconductor and critical mineral supply chains.
- Enhance coordination on export controls and technology security.
- Promote investment and innovation in trusted AI ecosystems.
- Improve resilience against supply chain disruptions arising from geopolitical tensions.

Features of the Initiative

- Encourages **co-investment** in AI and semiconductor industries.
- Supports diversification of supply chains among trusted partners.
- Facilitates cooperation on:
 - Technology standards.
 - Supply chain mapping.
 - Infrastructure development.
 - Investment security.

- Focuses on **"Innovation Sovereignty"**, promoting collaborative innovation instead of isolated national technology ecosystems.

Additional Info

India and Pax Silica

- India formally joined **Pax Silica** in **February 2026**.
- India's participation aims to:
 - Attract semiconductor investments.
 - Strengthen AI infrastructure.
 - Secure access to critical minerals.
 - Expand global technology partnerships.

Critical Minerals

Critical minerals are essential for manufacturing:

- Semiconductors.
- Electric vehicle batteries.
- Renewable energy technologies.
- Defence equipment.
- Artificial Intelligence hardware.

Examples include:

- Lithium
- Cobalt
- Nickel
- Graphite
- Rare Earth Elements (REEs)

Semiconductor Supply Chain

Major stages include:

- Raw material extraction.
- Chip design.
- Wafer fabrication.
- Packaging and testing.
- Assembly into electronic devices.

Why China Matters?

China has a dominant position in several segments of the global supply chain, particularly:

- Rare earth processing.
- Critical mineral refining.
- Electronics manufacturing.

This has prompted many countries to diversify sourcing and strengthen cooperation with trusted partners.

RIMPAC 2026: World's Largest Multinational Maritime Exercise Begins in Hawaii

What's the News?

The **Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2026** exercise has commenced in and around **Hawaii**, bringing together **31 participating nations** for the world's largest multinational maritime exercise. The biennial drill aims to enhance **interoperability, maritime security, disaster response capabilities,**

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and **collective deterrence** among partner navies in the Indo-Pacific region. India is participating through the **Indian Navy**, reinforcing its commitment to a **free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific**.

RIMPAC 2026

- **RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific)** is the world's largest international maritime exercise.
- Hosted by the **United States Navy** under the **U.S. Indo-Pacific Command**.
- Conducted **biennially** (every two years).
- **RIMPAC 2026** marks the **30th edition** of the exercise.
- The exercise is being conducted in and around the **Hawaiian Islands**.

Highlights

- **31 participating nations.**
- More than:
 - **30 surface warships.**
 - **5 submarines.**
 - **206+ aircraft.**
 - **30,000 personnel.**
- Includes:
 - Maritime security operations.
 - Anti-submarine warfare.
 - Air defence.
 - Amphibious operations.
 - Live-fire exercises.
 - Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR).
 - Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO).

Additional Info

About RIMPAC

- **Started:** 1971.
- **Frequency:** Biennial (even-numbered years).
- **Host:** U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet.
- **Venue:** Primarily in and around Hawaii.
- Considered the premier multinational naval exercise in the Indo-Pacific.

SAGAR

- **Full Form:** Security and Growth for All in the Region.
- Announced by the Government of India in **2015**.
- Focuses on:
 - Maritime security.
 - Regional cooperation.
 - Blue Economy.
 - Capacity building.
 - Disaster response.

Miscellaneous

SAFF Women's Championship 2026

What's the News?

- **India** hosted the **8th edition of the SAFF Women's Championship 2026**, the premier women's football tournament of South Asia.
- The tournament featured six participating nations of the **South Asian Football Federation (SAFF)** and was held in **Goa**.
- India ended its seven-year title drought by reclaiming the SAFF Women's Championship crown, reaffirming its position as a major force in South Asian women's football.

SAFF Women's Championship

- The **SAFF Women's Championship** is the flagship international women's football competition in South Asia.
- Organized by the **South Asian Football Federation (SAFF)**.
- First held in:
 - **2010**
- Frequency:
 - Traditionally biennial, though SAFF is considering making it an annual event to promote women's football in the region.

Participating Teams (2026)

- **India**
- **Bangladesh**
- **Nepal**
- **Sri Lanka**
- **Bhutan**
- **Maldives**
- Pakistan did not participate in the 2026 edition.

Tournament Format

- Six teams were divided into **two groups of three teams each**.
- The **top two teams** from each group advanced to the semi-finals.
- The winners of the semi-finals qualified for the final.

Group Composition

Group A

- Nepal
- Sri Lanka
- Bhutan

Group B

- India
- Bangladesh
- Maldives

India's Performance

- India entered the tournament seeking to end a prolonged title drought.
- The victory marked:

- India's return to the top of South Asian women's football.
- A boost for the development of women's football in the country.
- India remains the most successful team in the tournament's history.

Key Facts

- Host: **India (Goa)**
- Venue: **Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium (Fatorda Stadium), Margao**
- Edition: **8th**
- Governing Body: **SAFF**

Additional Info

South Asian Football Federation (SAFF)

- Regional football governing body of South Asia.
- Established:
 - **1997**
- Functions:
 - Organizes regional football competitions.
 - Promotes football development among member nations.
 - Functions under the umbrella of the **Asian Football Confederation (AFC)**.

SAFF Member Countries

- India
- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- Maldives
- Nepal
- Pakistan
- Sri Lanka

Governing Bodies in Football

- **FIFA**: Global governing body of football.
- **AFC (Asian Football Confederation)**: Continental football governing body for Asia.
- **SAFF**: Regional football federation for South Asia.

India Dominates Inaugural World Yogasana Championships

What's the News?

- India created history at the inaugural **World Yogasana Championships** held in **Ahmedabad, Gujarat**, by delivering a record-breaking performance on the global stage.
- The Indian contingent dominated the medal tally, securing a massive **114 medals**, which included a staggering **102 Gold medals**.

World Yogasana Championships

- The **World Yogasana Championships** is an international competition dedicated to **Yogasana as a sport**, featuring standardized yoga postures and routines.
- The inaugural edition brought together:
 - 522 athletes** from across the world.
 - Participants from **79 countries**.
 - Competitions across multiple age and performance categories.

India's Performance

- Medal tally:
 - 102 Gold**
 - Other medals taking the total to 114**
- India secured a dominant lead over all participating nations.
- Japan** finished second on the medal table, while several other countries also registered podium finishes.

Yogasana as a Competitive Sport

- Yogasana Sport** involves:
 - Artistic Yogasana.
 - Traditional Yogasana.
 - Rhythmic Yogasana.
 - Standardized performance-based judging criteria.
- Athletes are evaluated on:
 - Flexibility.
 - Strength.
 - Balance.
 - Precision of posture.
 - Artistic presentation.

Global Expansion of Yogasana

- The championship reflected the rapid internationalization of Yogasana.
- Athletes from Asia, Europe, Africa, Oceania, and the Americas participated.
- More than **30 countries** secured medals, indicating growing global engagement with the sport.

Additional Info

Yoga and India's Global Leadership

- The United Nations adopted the proposal to observe **International Day of Yoga** on **21 June**.
- Yoga is recognized globally as a holistic practice promoting:
 - Physical health.
 - Mental well-being.
 - Lifestyle management.

Ministry of Ayush

- Nodal ministry for:
 - Ayurveda
 - Yoga & Naturopathy
 - Unani
 - Siddha

- Sowa-Rigpa
- Homoeopathy

- Established in **2014**.

- Objective:

- Promotion and development of traditional systems of medicine and wellness.

Sports Governance Support

- The championship received support from:
 - Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**
 - Ministry of Ayush**
 - Sports Authority of India (SAI)**
 - Sports Authority of Gujarat**
 - State-level Yogasana sports bodies.

India Retains No. 1 Spot in ICC ODI Team Rankings

What's the News?

- India** has retained the **top position** in the **ICC Men's ODI Team Rankings** following the latest annual rankings update by the **International Cricket Council (ICC)**.
- India remains ahead of **New Zealand** and **Australia**, which occupy the second and third positions respectively.
- The major change in the top five rankings is **South Africa** overtaking **Pakistan** to move into fourth place.

ICC ODI Rankings Update

- India** continues as the world's highest-ranked ODI team with a rating of **118 points**.
- New Zealand** is placed second with **113 points**.
- Australia** remains third with **109 points**.
- South Africa** climbed to fourth place with **102 points**, surpassing **Pakistan** which slipped to fifth with **98 points**.

Top 5 Teams in ICC Men's ODI Rankings

Rank	Team	Rating Points
1	India	118
2	New Zealand	113
3	Australia	109
4	South Africa	102
5	Pakistan	98

How Are ICC Team Rankings Calculated?

- The ICC rankings system evaluates teams based on their performances over a rolling period.
- In the annual update:



- Matches played in the most recent period receive **100% weightage**.
- Older results within the ranking cycle receive **50% weightage**.
- This methodology ensures rankings reflect both recent form and sustained performance.

Additional Info

International Cricket Council (ICC)

- Established in **1909** as the governing body of international cricket.
- Headquarters: Dubai
- Responsible for:

- Administration of international cricket.
- Conduct of ICC tournaments.
- Maintenance of team and player rankings.

ICC Team Rankings

- Separate rankings are maintained for:
 - **Test Cricket**
 - **One Day Internationals (ODIs)**
 - **Twenty20 Internationals (T20Is)**
- Rankings are updated periodically based on match outcomes and series results.

Two Indian Airports Featured in Prix Versailles World's Most Beautiful Airports List 2026

What's the News?

India's **Navi Mumbai International Airport (Terminal 1)** and **Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport, Guwahati (Terminal 2)** have been included in the prestigious **Prix Versailles World's Most Beautiful Airports List 2026**. The recognition highlights excellence in airport architecture, sustainability, innovation and passenger-centric design.

Prix Versailles Awards

What is Prix Versailles?

- Prix Versailles is a global architecture and design award that recognizes outstanding contemporary projects worldwide.
- Presented annually at UNESCO since 2015.
- Covers categories such as:
 - Airports
 - Museums
 - Hotels
 - Restaurants
 - Campuses
 - Passenger stations
 - Sports facilities
- Evaluates projects on:
 - Architectural excellence
 - Sustainability
 - Cultural integration
 - Innovation
 - Social impact

Indian Airports on the 2026 List

Navi Mumbai International Airport (Terminal 1)

- Located in Maharashtra.
- Recognized for its modern architecture and sustainable design.
- Terminal design incorporates **lotus-inspired motifs**, extensive natural lighting and green spaces.
- Developed as a major aviation hub to reduce congestion at Mumbai's existing airport.
- Reflects India's emphasis on world-class airport infrastructure.

Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport (Terminal 2), Guwahati

- Located in Assam.
- Terminal design draws inspiration from the cultural and natural heritage of Northeast India.
- Features a **bamboo-inspired indoor sky forest** and sustainable architectural elements.
- Strengthens Guwahati's position as the gateway to Northeast India.
- Recognized for blending regional identity with modern aviation infrastructure.

Other Airports in the 2026 List

The seven airports selected by Prix Versailles for 2026 include:

Airport	Country
Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport (Terminal 3)	China
Frankfurt Airport (Terminal 3)	Germany
Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport (Terminal 2)	India
Navi Mumbai International Airport (Terminal 1)	India
Techo International Airport	Cambodia
Pittsburgh International Airport	USA
San Diego International Airport (Terminal 1)	USA

Additional Info

Navi Mumbai International Airport

- Located at **Ulwe, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra.**
- Developed by **Navi Mumbai International Airport Limited (NMIAL).**
- Intended to function as a second major airport for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.
- Designed to ease congestion at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport.

Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport

- Named after Gopinath Bordoloi.
- Largest airport in Northeast India.
- Operated by Adani Airports.
- Serves as a key aviation gateway for the northeastern states.

UNESCO

- Full Form: **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.**
- Established: **1945.**
- Headquarters: **Paris.**
- Promotes international cooperation in education, science and culture.

India Wins FIH Women's Nations Cup 2026, Secures Promotion to Pro League

What's the News?

The Indian Women's Hockey Team won the **FIH Women's Nations Cup 2026** by defeating **Ireland** in the final, successfully defending its title and earning promotion to the next season of the **FIH Hockey Pro League**. The victory marks a significant achievement for Indian women's hockey, strengthening its position among the world's top teams and providing an opportunity to compete regularly against elite hockey nations.

FIH Women's Nations Cup 2026

Tournament Overview

- Organized by the **International Hockey Federation (FIH).**
- Serves as the second-tier international tournament below the FIH Hockey Pro League.
- Features emerging and highly ranked teams competing for promotion.

India's Performance

- India remained one of the strongest teams throughout the tournament.
- Defeated Ireland in the final to clinch the championship.
- Successfully defended the Nations Cup title won in the previous edition.

- Earned qualification for the upcoming FIH Hockey Pro League season.

Promotion to FIH Hockey Pro League

The FIH Hockey Pro League is the premier annual international hockey competition. Benefits for India include:

- Regular matches against top-ranked hockey nations.
- Greater international exposure.
- Improved player development and competitive experience.
- Enhanced preparation for major tournaments such as:
 - Hockey World Cup
 - Olympic Games
 - Asian Games
 - Commonwealth Games

About FIH Hockey Pro League

- Launched by the **International Hockey Federation (FIH)** in 2019.
- Annual global league competition for top men's and women's national teams.
- Replaced the Hockey World League format.

International Hockey Federation (FIH)

- Full Name: **Fédération Internationale de Hockey (FIH)**
- Established: **1924**
- Headquarters: **Lausanne, Switzerland**
- Governing body for international field hockey.



India Wins Gold in Women's 4×100m Relay at Asian Relay Championships

What's the News?

The Indian women's team won the **gold medal** in the **4×100m relay** at the **Asian Relay Championships 2026**, delivering an impressive performance against strong continental competition. The victory marked one of India's most significant achievements in sprint relays and highlighted the growing strength of Indian athletics at the Asian level.

Women's 4×100m Relay Gold India's Winning Performance

- The Indian quartet secured the **gold medal** in the women's 4×100m relay event.
- The team produced a strong finish and efficient baton exchanges throughout the race.
- The victory placed India at the top of the podium ahead of several established Asian sprinting nations.

Asian Relay Championships

- A continental athletics competition organized under the **Asian Athletics Association (AAA)**.
- Brings together Asia's leading relay teams.
- Serves as a qualification and preparation platform for global athletics competitions.

Additional Info

Athletics Federation of India (AFI)

- Established: 1946
- Headquarters: New Delhi
- Governing body for athletics in India.
- Affiliated with:
 - World Athletics
 - Asian Athletics Association

Asian Athletics Association (AAA)

- Governing body for athletics in Asia.
- Organizes:
 - Asian Athletics Championships
 - Asian Relay Championships
 - Other continental athletics events.

Relay Race Basics

4×100m Relay

- Four athletes run 100 metres each.
- Baton exchanges occur within designated exchange zones.
- Smooth baton passing is often as important as raw sprinting speed.

Common Causes of Disqualification

- Baton exchange outside the exchange zone.
- Lane violations.

- Dropping the baton and failing to recover it properly.

Neeraj Chopra and Parul Chaudhary Named Athletes of the Year at Indian Athletics Awards 2025

What's the News?

Olympic medalist **Neeraj Chopra** and long-distance runner **Parul Chaudhary** were honoured as the **Best Male Athlete** and **Best Female Athlete** respectively at the inaugural **Indian Athletics Awards 2025**. The awards, instituted by the **Athletics Federation of India (AFI)**, recognize outstanding performances by Indian athletes across various categories.

Indian Athletics Awards 2025

Purpose of the Awards

The awards were launched to:

- Recognize excellence in Indian athletics.
- Encourage emerging talent.
- Celebrate achievements across track and field events.
- Promote athletics as a major competitive sport in India.

Major Winners

Best Male Athlete

- **Neeraj Chopra**
- Recognized for his consistent performances at international competitions and continued dominance in javelin throw.

Best Female Athlete

- **Parul Chaudhary**
- Honoured for her achievements in long-distance and steeplechase events at international championships.

Other Award Categories

Recognition Beyond Senior Athletes

The awards also recognized:

- Emerging athletes.
- Junior performers.
- Coaches and support staff.
- Outstanding contributors to Indian athletics.

Athletics Federation of India (AFI)

- Established: 1946
- Headquarters: **New Delhi**
- Governing body for athletics in India.
- Affiliated with:
 - **World Athletics**
 - **Asian Athletics Association**

Functions

- Selection of national athletics teams.
- Conduct of national championships.

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- Development of athletes and coaches.
- Promotion of athletics across India.

Additional Info

Neeraj Chopra

- Event: Javelin Throw
- Olympic Gold Medal: Tokyo Olympics
- Olympic Silver Medal: Paris Olympics
- First Indian athlete to win an Olympic gold medal in track and field athletics.

Parul Chaudhary

- Specialization:
 - 3000m Steeplechase
 - 5000m
- Among India's leading distance runners in recent years.

World Athletics

- Former Name: International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF)
- Headquarters: Monaco
- Governing body for global athletics competitions.

Books and Authors Updates

What's the News?

Two notable books were released recently:

1. **"The Second Orbit: Belief of a Man... Dreams of 1.4 Billion Hearts"**, the memoir of Indian astronaut **Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla**, was released by **Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh**. The memoir chronicles Shukla's journey from fighter pilot to astronaut and his mission to the **International Space Station (ISS)**.
2. **Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar** released **"Sanskritir Ratna Bhandar: Bhawaiyar Itibritto"**, a book documenting the history and evolution of the **Bhawaiya** folk music tradition of North Bengal, highlighting the importance of preserving India's cultural heritage.

"The Second Orbit: Belief of a Man... Dreams of 1.4 Billion Hearts"

- **Author:** Group Captain **Shubhanshu Shukla**
- **Genre:** Memoir
- **Released by:** Air Chief Marshal **Amar Preet Singh**
- **Publisher:** Penguin Random House India

About the Book

The memoir narrates:

- Shubhanshu Shukla's journey from an Indian Air Force fighter pilot to an astronaut.
- His selection and rigorous astronaut training.
- Preparation for India's human spaceflight programme.
- Experiences during the **Axiom-4 mission** to the **International Space Station (ISS)**.
- The personal challenges, discipline and resilience behind achieving one of India's landmark space missions.

"Sanskritir Ratna Bhandar: Bhawaiyar Itibritto"

- Released by the **Vice-President of India**.
- Documents the origin, development and cultural significance of the **Bhawaiya** folk music tradition.

About Bhawaiya Folk Music

- One of the oldest folk music traditions of **North Bengal**.
- Popular in:
 - North Bengal (West Bengal)
 - Assam
 - Parts of Bangladesh
- Traditionally sung by:
 - Bullock-cart drivers
 - Buffalo herders
 - Rural communities

Themes

- Love and separation.
- Rural life.
- Nature.
- Human emotions.
- Devotion and social traditions.

Additional Info

Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla

- Indian Air Force officer and astronaut.
- Among the astronauts selected for **ISRO's Gaganyaan Mission**.
- Participated in the **Axiom-4 Mission** to the International Space Station.
- His memoir offers insights into astronaut selection, training and life in space.

Gaganyaan Mission

- India's first indigenous human spaceflight mission.
- Implemented by **ISRO**.
- Objective:
 - Demonstrate India's capability to send humans into Low Earth Orbit (LEO) and safely return them.

Global Skills Challenge Australia 2026: India Wins Five Medals

What's the News?

India delivered an impressive performance at the **Global Skills Challenge (GSC) Australia 2026**, winning **five medals—three gold, one silver and one bronze**. The competition served as a preparatory event for the **48th WorldSkills Competition**, scheduled to be held in **Shanghai, China**, later this year. The achievement highlights India's growing excellence in vocational skills and advanced technologies.

Global Skills Challenge 2026

- Held in **Australia** with participation from **16 WorldSkills member countries**.
- Around **600 participants**, including competitors, experts, translators and officials.
- Conducted as a simulation of the **WorldSkills Competition**, following international assessment standards.
- India fielded a **30-member contingent**, comprising:
 - **15 competitors**
 - **15 experts**

India's Medal Winners

Medal	Winner	State	Skill Category
Gold	Pavan Bhadravati Suresha	Karnataka	Additive Manufacturing
Gold	Mausam Kumar Giri	Bihar	Cloud Computing
Gold	Vishnupriya Sunil	Delhi	Health and Social Care
Silver	Harsh Ramesh Pawar	Maharashtra	3D Digital Game Art
Bronze	Muskan	Haryana	Painting and Decorating

Additional Info

About Global Skills Challenge (GSC)

- An international skill competition organised as a preparatory event for **WorldSkills**.
- Simulates actual WorldSkills competition conditions.
- Competitors are evaluated using the **Competition Information System (CIS)**, the standard assessment framework used in WorldSkills events.

WorldSkills Competition

- Known as the **"Olympics of Skills."**
- Organised by **WorldSkills International (WSI)**.
- Conducted **biennially**.
- Brings together young skilled professionals from member countries to compete across vocational and technical skill categories.
- **48th Edition Host:** Shanghai, China (2026).

Skill India Mission

- Launched in **2015**.
- Implemented by the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)**.
- Objectives:
 - Enhance employability.
 - Promote industry-relevant skill development.
 - Increase global competitiveness of Indian youth.
 - Foster vocational education and lifelong learning.

Indian Army Rowers Win India's First-Ever World Rowing Cup Gold

What's the News?

Indian Army rowers **Lakshay** and **Ujjwal Kumar Singh** created history by winning **India's first-ever gold medal at a World Rowing Cup**. The duo secured the top position in the **Men's Lightweight Double Sculls (LM2x)** event at the **World Rowing Cup III** held in **Lucerne, Switzerland**, marking a landmark achievement for Indian rowing.

Historic Achievement

- **Competition:** World Rowing Cup III 2026.

- **Venue:** Lucerne, Switzerland.
- **Event:** Men's Lightweight Double Sculls (LM2x).
- **Achievement:** India's **first-ever gold medal** at a World Rowing Cup.
- **Winning Time:** 6:26.09 minutes.

Medal Winners

- **Lakshay** – Indian Army.
- **Ujjwal Kumar Singh** – Indian Army.
- Both athletes train at the **Army Rowing Node**, Pune, under the Indian Army's **Mission Olympics Wing**.

About the World Rowing Cup

- An annual international rowing competition organised by **World Rowing**.

- Consists of multiple regattas held across different countries.
- Serves as a premier competition before the **World Rowing Championships** and major multi-sport events.

Lightweight Double Sculls (LM2x)

- Boat class featuring **two rowers**.
- Each athlete uses **two oars (sculling)**.
- No coxswain is present.
- Requires exceptional endurance, coordination and synchronization.

Additional Info

World Rowing

- **Former Name:** International Rowing Federation (FISA).
- **Headquarters:** Lausanne, Switzerland.
- **Role:** Global governing body for the sport of rowing.
- Governs:
 - World Rowing Cup.
 - World Rowing Championships.
 - Olympic rowing competitions.

Army Sports in India

- The **Mission Olympics Wing** of the Indian Army identifies and trains talented athletes in Olympic disciplines.
- The **Army Rowing Node (Pune)** is one of India's premier rowing training centres.

India Wins Historic Bronze at AVC Men's Volleyball Cup 2026

What's the News?

India scripted history by winning its **first-ever medal at the AVC Men's Volleyball Cup**, securing the **bronze medal** after defeating **defending champions Bahrain 3-1** in the third-place playoff. The podium finish marks India's best-ever performance in the tournament and reflects the growing standard of Indian volleyball.

India's Historic Campaign

- **Tournament:** AVC Men's Volleyball Cup 2026.
- **Host:** India.
- **Bronze Medal Match:** India defeated Bahrain 3-1.
- **Set Scores:**

- 25-23
- 23-25
- 25-21
- 25-17

- This was India's **first podium finish** in the history of the competition.

Tournament Performance

- India remained **unbeaten in the pool stage**.
- Reached the **semi-finals** before losing to eventual runners-up South Korea.
- Recovered strongly to defeat Bahrain and secure the bronze medal.
- The performance earned valuable **FIVB World Ranking points**, improving India's international standing.

About the AVC Men's Volleyball Cup

- Premier annual men's volleyball tournament in Asia.
- Organised by the **Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC)**.
- Features leading Asian national teams that are not participating in the **Volleyball Nations League (VNL)**.
- Formerly known as the:
 - AVC Challenge Cup.
 - AVC Nations Cup.
- Provides **FIVB World Ranking points** and pathways to higher international competitions.

Additional Info

Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC)

- **Founded:** 1952.
- **Headquarters:** Bangkok, Thailand.
- **Affiliation:** International Volleyball Federation (FIVB).
- Governing body for volleyball in Asia and Oceania.

Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB)

- **Founded:** 1947.
- **Headquarters:** Lausanne, Switzerland.
- Global governing body for volleyball and beach volleyball.